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NEW STUDIES IN TENNYSON  
INCLUDING A  
COMMENTARY ON MAUD.



# NEW STUDIES IN TENNYSON

INCLUDING A

## COMMENTARY ON "MAUD."

BY

MORTON LUCE,

*Late Assistant Lecturer on English Literature,  
University College, Bristol.*

PART I. LESSONS FROM TENNYSON.

PART II. TENNYSON AND HIS REVIEWERS.

"To be incapable of a feeling of poetry, in my sense of the word, is to be without love of human nature and reverence for God."—WORDSWORTH.

*SECOND EDITION.*

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## P R E F A C E.

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THIS little book offers to the public some results of the author's study of Lord Tennyson. It is intended to precede, possibly by several years, a much larger work which has long been in course of preparation, and which will contain complete commentaries on the "In Memoriam," "Maud," "The Princess," and "The Idylls of the King," together with critical and explanatory notes on all the other writings of the late Laureate.

THE DOWNS SCHOOL, CLIFTON,  
*May, 1893.*

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### PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

THE very favourable reception accorded to these New Studies in Tennyson has exhausted the First Edition within a few months; and the Author is encouraged to issue a Second Edition in which a few alterations have been made.

CLIFTON,  
*October, 1893.*



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# New Studies in Tennyson.

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## PART I.

### *LESSONS FROM TENNYSON.*

#### INTRODUCTION.

IN these days of reaction against annotations of literary art, some apology is due from the author of the following pages. He will therefore briefly plead that for many years he has endeavoured, in lecture or lesson, to stimulate the higher emotion and to cultivate the finer imagination of the student, rather than to check the growth of these artistic faculties by an accumulation of unsympathetic facts. And although such lessons cannot be reproduced in print, the following specimen notes may possibly be found useful.

Some help the student or the general reader must have ; and the commentator has merely to see to it that the information he offers is of the right kind. The author, many years ago, met with a book entitled "How to Look at a Picture." With the aid of this book he was soon able to discover and appreciate in any good painting a thousand beauties hitherto concealed from his most careful gaze. Pos-

sibly, then, the following *lessons* may help some student or casual reader to look at and listen to a poem.

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## I. THREE LESSONS IN CONSECUITION OF THOUGHT.

### "IN MEMORIAM."

SUCH help is needed most of all in the interpretation of this popular but difficult work. As will be noticed further on, mistakes are to be met with even in the most recent commentaries on the "In Memoriam"; and the following incident may give the reader an idea of the care required to be taken in any attempt to elucidate the text.

In the year 1881, Mr. Francis Storr, Editor of the *Journal of Education*, requested me to send to the journal each month some difficult passages from English literature, for the best solution of which he offered prizes to his readers. On one of these occasions I selected six passages from the "In Memoriam," and, as usual, enclosed my explanations with them. But both the editor and the prize winner differed from me in regard to my interpretation of the following lines in the introductory stanzas,

"Forgive what seems my sin in me,

What seem'd my worth since I began"—

and also of the last stanza of Section 46. Upon this I forwarded the arguments that had established my conclusions, and with the result that both the editor and the prize winner inclined to my solution of the first difficulty (p. 16); but the second was left

undecided, the editor being in favour of the “*despice tanquam*” view, I of “*aspice est*.” This doubt was solved in 1893; for in the January number of the *Nineteenth Century* this year, Mr. Knowles gave us Lord Tennyson’s own explanation, which is that of my paraphrase of 1881 (*see page 18*).

Returning to the first passage, I would remark that the stanzas, “Strong Son of God,” which are so widely known—some of them even in our hymn-books—ought certainly to be better understood. And yet, in the most recent “Companion to the ‘In Memoriam,’ ” that by E. R. Chapman, 1888, the old mistakes occur in the author’s analysis, which is as follows:—“The Poet dedicates his Elegy to that Unseen Love, which is, he trusts, at the heart of things, in which all things live, and move, and have their being, which is perfect power and perfect tenderness and perfect justice. *He prays forgiveness of this Divine Power for all the errors, all the sins which are in his song of suffering and pain. He prays forgiveness for its merits, and for his grief.* And he trusts to meet his friend again, perfected ‘in Him.’ ”

I will now endeavour to indicate the course of thought that runs through these eleven stanzas.

They are a general Preface, which includes Invocation, Apology, Confession of Faith, Prayer, and also, to some extent, Dedication—a Preface, written, as we may suppose, some twelve years after the poem itself was completed. And just as Section 1<sup>1</sup> is an apology to the general public for a seeming in-

<sup>1</sup> “I held it truth,” etc.

dulgence in this long poetical expression of grief, so these stanzas contain a reverent apology to the God who, if He found it good to take away, had first found it good to give. Somewhat similar is the thought contained in this other beautiful stanza by Tennyson :—

“ God gives us love ; something to love  
    He lends us ; but when love is grown  
To ripeness, that on which it throve  
    Falls off, and love is left alone.”

It is, then, as an Apology that these stanzas have most interest for us, and they are addressed to that Immortal Love, to whom, by his search after a lost mortal love, the poet was gradually led. With Faith as his guide during this long journey, he passed safely by pitfalls of reason, and stumbling-blocks of seeming facts, till he reached the inmost regions of the spiritual life, held communion with his spirit friend (Section 95), and with him bowed before the throne of Divine Love, “the Lord and King” (Section 126).

I will now comment on the text in detail.

**STRONG** :—As opposed to our weakness, discovered by the poet’s investigations ; and strong because the same investigations convinced the poet that love, the highest human aspiration, emotion, and virtue ; love begotten of God and incarnate in Christ, and thus linking the human with the divine ; and love, the essence of the Deity, was the one thing powerful in life, powerful over death, powerful for eternity.

**SON OF GOD, IMMORTAL** :—These epithets were anticipated in the former note ; the poem began with

an individual love, and with death, and rose to the height of the great Universal Love and Immortality ; and that universal love which the poet reached through the personal could only thus be comprehended by his human mind—as begotten of the Author of all (whose most precious attribute is love), and as made divine-human in the Son ; destined again in any of its threefold characters<sup>1</sup> to last for ever.

But, "Il doit moins se prouver qu'il ne doit se sentir," or, in Latin, "Crede ut intelligas" (Section 124), that is, "We feel God ; do not find Him out" (by any human methods). It was not subtle analysis, but "the likest God within the soul,"<sup>2</sup> that revealed God to the searcher. This—and it occurs in the very first stanza—is the main argument of the poem, that belief in foundation truths rests not upon reason nor philosophy, nay, nor on the creeds themselves ; but upon convictions, high emotions, Divine instincts. Once more, the "broken light" of a human love guided the poet to that love which is the light and the life of the universe.

### STANZA II.

Love, then, or the God who is Love, is the Author of all things. Stupendous and blessed thought ! Ah, but then that same Being must be the Author of Death, and He seems almost to scorn us dead.

### STANZA III.

But is there nothing beyond death ? There must be, for the Maker is Love.

<sup>1</sup> Especially the first and second ; see also former note.

<sup>2</sup> "The divinity that stirs within us."

## STANZA IV.

Ah, yet again ; for the love of the Godhead is too high for us ! But has it not been written, "Through Him, therefore, we have access unto the Father " ? In such mysterious wise, then, the Divine Love may reach our humanity and the *individual* man. Another mystery, "the abysmal deeps of personality" (Sect. 45), the marvel of free will, of the responsible "Ego." No marvel ; a "broken light" again ; this scheme of individuals in a vast universe, and in the presence of its vaster Maker is both grand and simple ; we are created by being allowed to create ourselves. This is "the law within the law." ("Two Voices.")

## STANZA V.

Can a part contain the whole ? Who, then, may hope to "read the riddle of the painful earth," or pluck out the heart of the mystery of his single being ? Systems of thought and systems of religion, useful enough in their time and place, can never fully reveal or explain the Author of all, although through these sometimes may shine upon us uncertain rays of the one great "Light for which all thirst."<sup>1</sup>

## STANZA VI.

Therefore, yet once again, and even in this nineteenth century, we have nothing to rest on but Faith ;

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<sup>1</sup> " Which thro' the web of being blindly wove,  
Burns bright or dim, as each are mirrors of  
The light for which all thirst."—Shelley, "*Adonais.*"

for what we call knowledge is derived entirely from the material world, by the operation of the intellect. It could never explain the unknown. Science, no doubt, has its uses ; it may give us wider views of the material universe, and so help us, *if we learn aright*, to “look through nature up to nature’s God” ; even this instrument Knowledge is one of His gifts who giveth all.

### STANZA VII.

But what of the abuses of Science, especially if we may judge from the spirit of the times ?<sup>1</sup> I wish it all prosperity, but I trust it may still be tempered with reverence ; and may we never lose sight of the time when childlike ignorance gave us childlike faith ; and may the moral, the emotional, and the intellectual faculties still in the same well-balanced mind make unto earth and heaven “one grand sweet song”—nay, grander, as the new and gifted ages lend each their strong new harmonies.

### STANZA VIII.

But alas ! in this nineteenth century are we not irreverent and foolish, and made yet more foolish and irreverent by the arrogant knowledge we vainly deem wisdom ?

<sup>1</sup> “What is she, cut from Love and Faith,” etc. (Sect. 114). One of the most important of the lessons taught by this great teacher. It is the one that occurs most frequently, and is insisted upon most sternly. To my thinking the warning, the faith, the hope of Section 120 is of more vital interest to the world than all the achievements of modern science. If through Science human beings are to revert to greater apes, “what matters science unto men ?”

## STANZA IX.

And am not I of all men most foolish ? (See paraphrase.)<sup>1</sup>

## STANZA X.

And my grief—alas, that too was folly.

## STANZA XI.

And to pour forth that rebellious grief in this long faultful poem was folly most of all.

My next example is a section (91) that presents no verbal difficulties at all, but requires for explanation merely a looking before and after, and a recognition of the way in which nature, as usual, is poetically pressed into the service of man. This is the analysis given by Chapman :—" Again the cry of longing—the yearning 'Come!' and once more 'come.' But the spring is here, and the summer at hand, and the season speaks of hope, not desolation, and entreaty melts almost into triumph, as fancy pictures the prayer answered ; and that beloved

<sup>1</sup> "Forgive all the so-called sinful actions ; forgive all the so-called meritorious actions of my past life. *Sinful* and *meritorious* are terms that have no meaning except for the imperfect being that employs them—man. Therefore I asked thee to forgive my merit as well.\* Man is worthy or unworthy only in respect to his relations with man ; though he should do all for Thee, yet wouldest Thou account him an unprofitable servant."

\* "The best of what we do and are,  
Just God, forgive !"

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form revealed—not in watches of the night—but in a glory of sunshine."

The following, as I venture to think, is the course of thought in this section :—

"And if thou shouldst ever come back,<sup>1</sup> then come back to me *in spring time*, with 'sweet human hands and lips and eye,' even as I knew thee among thy fellows *in the spring-time of thy life*, and with that rare promise of the future like a glory<sup>2</sup> around thy brow. Or when *late summer is teeming to the harvest*, so come thou, beloved, *in thy form of spiritual maturity*; yet come not as a vulgar ghost at midnight; nay, beautiful spirit friend, descend on me, as is most seemly, in brightest day,<sup>3</sup> thyself within earth's sunlight a shape of heavenly splendour."

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The third example, Section 46, has already been referred to, for it contains the difficult stanza to which Lord Tennyson himself supplied the key. Chapman's summary here given seems to be almost altogether wrong. "He prays that his love for his lost friend may dwell with him to the very end of life—not sorrowfully, or his life's work could not be done—but still ever in his heart. So that, looking back upon this life from out the clearness and the calm of the other, it may appear all tinged with roseate hues of love—all—not the five rich years of friendship only."

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<sup>1</sup> See last stanza of 90, and the whole of 92.

<sup>2</sup> More exactly "nimbus."

<sup>3</sup> Cf. "Maud," Part II., iv. 12.

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My paraphrase, as supplied to the *Journal of Education*, was the following :—

“As we journey through this world, the path of our pilgrimage, now thorn beset, now flower-bordered, dies away into the distance we leave behind. So let it be, for who could bear to look back on all the failings of a life-time? But in the measureless morning of the life beyond the tomb no shadows of sunset are thrown over the path of existence; there, from one end of it to the other, the landscape of the past shall lie clear in everlasting light. There, shall thy life appear manifest, panoramic; there, fruit-bearing, those days of unbroken progress, days well ordered, wealthy in peace, and those five years of our friendship the richest tract of all. O love, five years are surely but a little space, a narrow realm, a bounded view. Nay, love, look again; lo! starlike, love sheds influence over all thy life; not an hour that is not clear and fresh and rosy with the glow of love.”

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If these three examples should encourage any of my readers to study the whole poem, I would name the following as among useful books and papers on the subject, viz., those by Hutton, Robertson, Gatty, Tainsh, Bayne, Steadman, Haweis, Genung, Chapman. Genung’s is the most suggestive work for a special study, but it must be read with caution. Chapman’s, though often superficial, is very useful for a beginner. And if I should seem to have spoken disparagingly of existing commentaries on the “In Memoriam,” it is because such a great and good poem has surely deserved better at the hands of commentators. Let me

tell you, in as few words as possible, how great and good it really is ; its faults will receive some attention in another part of this book.

From a merely artistic point of view I regard as its crowning excellence those marvellous lyrical outbursts (Section 86 is the very finest) that every now and then are heard above the long "monotone of pain." But a great poem is written for lay readers as much as for critics. "Let who will make the people's laws, let me make the people's songs" ; and if the soul of truth is sometimes the one thing precious to the masses, they seldom altogether omit to recognise the body of beauty through which the soul is made manifest to them. Should the poem fail to secure permanent fame, that will be because the form does not fittingly enshrine the thought. By virtue of the thought this work ought to be as permanently popular as Gray's "Elegy" ; like that immortal song it deals with the most universal, the most indispensable of all human emotions. If life is the comedy of existence, death is its tragedy, and love its beneficent God ; and the "Elegy," like the "In Memoriam," sings of Death and Love. Next we have to notice Gray's complaint, that "the Elegy owed its popularity entirely to the subject, and that the public would have received it as well as if it had been written in prose." How strange ! If it had been written in prose the public would have had nothing to do with it. And do you know that genius sometimes discovers itself *not less in choice of subject than in mode of treatment*? Well, the people received it, not because the poet had something good to say (that had been said before in

some form or other), but almost entirely because he said it in the most exquisite way imaginable. Matthew Arnold is certainly wrong in defending Gray's opinion that the Elegy was not his best work in poetry ; on the contrary, it is not only his best work, it is also immeasurably superior to any of his other productions. I have been tempted to say this about Gray, because it is the *charm* of Gray's Elegy that Tennyson has often been fortunate enough to rival, possibly to surpass—the charm, namely, of faultless form, vitalised by faultless spirit ; so vitalised, indeed, that form and spirit “touch, mingle, are transfigured” as far as may be in poetic art ; it is a charm not inferior to the charm of music, in which the transfiguration is complete ; nay, rather, superior, because expressed in that word-symbolism, by whose aid the sound-symbolism of music was developed, and to which, consciously or unconsciously, the eloquence of music must for many generations longer be related. Parts of the “In Memoriam,” if not the poem as a whole, satisfy this test of poetry.

Next, it is in all literature, the most faithful imaginative reflection of the age in which it was written, and that age may be one of the greatest in the world's history. If you would know all that your time has to offer you of “what is wise and good and graceful” (Section 103), if you would have it interpreted, presented to you as “Heliconian honey in living words,”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “To make a truth less harsh.” And just as a proverb is “the wisdom of many set forth by the wit of one,” so the poet is the greatest of teachers because of the *beautiful form* of his teaching. I speak as on a secular ground.

read your "In Memoriam"—much more than read it. Is it too much to say that if every Englishman—if every man and woman of English-speaking race could know this poem by heart, and comprehend it, then our common humanity would be advanced ten centuries nearer to its consummation ?

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## II.

## A LESSON FROM THE LYRICS.

## "TEARS, IDLE TEARS?"

FROM the Lyrics I choose the song, "Tears, idle Tears," partly because we do not expect to find much sediment of thought where the music has been evaporated out of this species of composition, and partly because so many of us have quoted the three words, "Tears, idle tears," without suspecting their meaning, or without caring to believe that they could have any meaning at all. Yet even the airy structure of song should rest on some solid foundation, and I shall endeavour to show that these simple stanzas may tell us much about themselves that is pleasant and profitable, and may be made to reveal not a little of the author's inner life.

But the author must be his own interpreter. This, which is so specially true of Shakespeare, is true of all other great poets. For example, we begin our process of interpretation in this case by quoting from Tennyson's "Timbuctoo" of 1829:—

"I have raised thee nigher to the spheres of heaven,  
 Man's *first*, last home ; and thou with ravish'd sense  
 Listenest the lordly music flowing from  
 Th' illimitable years."

Almost the same words, and many kindred thoughts, are to be found in the "Ode to Memory," which probably dates earlier ; and in the "Lover's Tale," written, as the poet tells us, in his nineteenth year, we meet with "The Goddess of the Past," "The Present is the Vassal of the Past," and more to the same effect. And from these earliest poems ("Poems by Two Brothers" are better avoided) we may turn to the last sweet and sad volume of all, and there, in the very last and most sacred poem of all, "The Silent Voices," we hear "a wind of memory murmuring the Past."

Now search through the poet's work that lies between these limits, and you will discover almost countless passages suggestive of *deep musings and tender broodings over the past—and not the past of human life alone; for many of them are "echoes of some antenatal dream."*

Two or three of these passages I will select. The first is from a poem published in *The Gem*, 1831 :—

"O sad No more ! O sweet No more !  
 O strange No more ! . . . .  
 There was a ringing in my ears . . . .  
 And both my eyes gushed out with tears ;  
 Surely all pleasant things had gone before."

From "Locksley Hall" I choose :—

"Thou shalt hear the 'Never, never,' whisper'd by  
the phantom years,  
And a song from out the distance in the ringing of  
thine ears."

Here compare—

"The earliest pipe of half-awaken'd birds  
To dying ears."

(Numerous other such comparisons, with explanations, will be given in the larger volume.)

For the antenatal recollections we may turn to the "Two Voices":—

"Moreover, something is or seems,  
That touches me with mystic gleams,  
Like glimpses of forgotten dreams,  
  
Of something felt like something here,  
Of something done, I know not where,  
Such as no language may declare."

But the most important reference is this, to the "Ancient Sage":—

"To-day? but what of yesterday? for oft  
On me, when boy, there came what then I call'd . . .  
In my boy-phrase 'The Passion of the Past.'  
The first grey streak of earliest summer dawn, . . .  
Desolate sweetness—far and far away—"

And with that compare—

"What vague world-whisper, mystic pain or joy,  
Thro' those three words would haunt him when a boy,  
Far—far—away?"

“A whisper from his dawn of life? a breath  
From some fair dawn beyond the doors of death,  
Far—far—away?

“Far, far, how far? from o'er the gates of Birth,  
The faint horizons, all the bounds of earth,  
Far—far—away?”<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, this lovely song, “Far—Far—Away” resembles “Tears, idle tears” in many points, and not the least in its strange sweet sad charm.

Next, the “In Memoriam” contains many references to the “eternal landscape of the Past.” But I refrain from further quotations from Tennyson, at least until I have called upon one or two other poets to aid me in the work of elucidation.

Wordsworth’s “Ode on the Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood” must, of course, be mentioned first. In this we have an eloquent expression of these sweet and sad visions of the past, these yearnings for something better—above us—beyond us—Far, far away :—

“It is not now as it has been of yore . . .  
The things which I have seen I now can see *no more.*”

This expression *no more*, which occurs in the refrain of “Tears, idle tears,” must detain us here. It is a great favourite with our poets; so is “never more.” Poe’s account of his selecting the long *o* as the most sonorous vowel, in connection with the *r* as the most producible consonant, is over fanciful; but we may

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<sup>1</sup> “The Soul . . . cometh from afar.” Wordsworth’s Ode on the *Intimations*.

readily believe that the refrain “Never more” created his well-known poem ; and this is true of refrains generally; they help to build up the lyrical structure.

A good example of this fact may be found in the first song of “The Princess,” in which the significant bit of local colouring, “pluck’d the ripen’d ears” (see “Maud,” Part II., i. line 3), was suggested by the refrain “with tears.” *No more* appears again in the song, “Ask me no more” (“Princess”), and this latter sentence begins each of five stanzas in a song by Carew. *No more* and other combinations of *more*, occur in the passages selected from “King Lear” and “Othello” (See A Lesson from “The Princess,” p. 40). These remarks on the words “no more” must close with two appropriate quotations, one from Byron :—

“No more, no more, oh nevermore on me,  
The freshness of the heart shall fall like dew,”

and one from Shelley,—

“When will return the glory of your prime?  
No more—oh never more !”

In our search after the inmost meaning of “Tears, idle tears,” we must not forget to examine the context, although here we shall discover but little to our purpose. All the poet tells us about the purport of his song is this, that it “moans about the retrospect”; that it deals not with “the other distance, and the hues of promise.” Here, again, reflection lifts the rod to silence feeling ; Tennyson chides his Violet much as Shakespeare rebukes a Hamlet, or a Brutus, when they echo some secret yearning that escaped in music

from his soul ; and we understand that the author of "The Princess"—partly in his artistic design—will not make any frank admission such as that we have heard in "The Ancient Sage." The dramatic purpose of the song—and there is little enough of this—may be discovered in one line of the context, where we are told that some of the girls imprisoned in the College "murmur'd that their May was passing"; and we may suppose that Violet gives expression to this regret.

I do not wish to imply that our great poet is in the habit of idly and uselessly "moaning about the retrospect"; the rebuke of The Princess, also, is something more than dramatic, as we may learn from the "Golden Year":—

"Old writers push'd the happy season back,—  
The more fools they,—we forward : dreamers both !"

But for all this, the past and the far—

"The devotion to something afar  
From the scene of our sorrow,"

the lost, the gone—all these are a passion to him; and a passion that must sometimes seek utterance. It is Wordsworth's case over again :—

"To me alone there came a thought of grief;  
A timely utterance gave that thought relief,  
And I again am strong."

*Deep musings and tender broodings over the past—and not the past of human life alone, for many of them are "echoes of some antenatal dream!" I repeat these words (p. 22), for they suggest our next inquiry; What*

was there in that past? and what is it that is lost and gone? According to Wordsworth, it is a kind of "celestial light" that "apparelled" all earthly objects until "Shades of the prison house began to close Upon the growing boy."

"Such hues from their celestial urn  
Were wont to stream before mine eye,  
Where'er it wandered in the morn  
Of blissful infancy."

*Evening Voluntary.*

So it was with Tennyson. He was doomed to lose the light of "the million stars which tremble O'er the deep mind of dauntless infancy." He came amongst us, "trailing clouds of glory"; he became a man, only to see them

"Die away,  
And fade into the light of common day."

*Ode on Intimations.*

And now,

"That type of Perfect in his mind  
In Nature can he nowhere find.  
He sows himself on every wind."

*Two Voices.*

Yet ever and again he exchanges his grown-up Platonic faith for childhood's perfect sight, or the more perfect antenatal vision—as only a poet can.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "This glimpse of glory, why renewed? . . .  
Which at this moment, on my waking sight  
Appears to shine, by miracle restored."

*Evening Voluntary.*

But I may not do more than touch upon any Platonic element in this marvellous song ; I will only trust that the foregoing considerations will now enable us to paraphrase the famous first line,—

“Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean.”

In prose the author would speak to us thus :—

“If you suppose that your poet’s regret for the past is not very natural, very deep, and very real, then you know him scarcely at all.”

“A height, a broken grange, a grove, a flower  
Had murmurs, Lost and gone and lost and gone !<sup>1</sup>  
A breath, a whisper—some *divine farewell.*”

*Ancient Sage.*

Here we have the epithet *divine* of “Tears, idle tears” (l. 2).

“Trailing clouds of glory do we come  
*From God,* who is our home.”

*Ode on Intimations.*

“Dreams of the past, how exquisite ye be,  
Offspring of *heavenly faith.*”

And in these quotations we may possibly find the source of that epithet ; something also not altogether alien in this :—

<sup>1</sup> “But there’s a tree, of many, one,  
A single field, which I have looked upon ;  
Both of them speak of something that is gone.”

*Ode on Intimations.*

“ What sight so lured him from the fields he knew,  
As where earth’s green stole into heaven’s own hue,  
Far—far—away ? ”

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I have done little more than conduct the student-lover of Tennyson to the threshold of this beautiful building of song ; but doubtless he will enter in and survey the glory of the interior for himself. Therefore I take my leave of him with just one parting remark. One of the chief reasons for the superlative excellence of “ Tears, Idle Tears ” will be found in the absence of rhyme. This, and especially in so short a composition, gives the poet a great advantage, and enables him to unite the three elements of thought, feeling, and expression in an equal perfection. So perfect, indeed, are all these, that the absence of rhyme is not felt, and the lyric has a melody of its own, which, as was implied above, is admirably adapted to the melancholy sweetness of the thought.

And now, little song, what shall be my word of farewell to you ? I trust that you are very precious to all who read you, or sing you, or muse upon your silent music. If I were Shelley, I should “ bid them own that thou art beautiful ” ; or if I were the laurelled singer who sang you with such ineffable charm, I might sing again,—

“ What charm in words ? a charm no words could give !  
O dying words, can music make you live  
Far—far—away ? ”

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## III.

## THE COMMENTARY ON "MAUD."

IF it is not easy to write about a simple lyric by Tennyson without some suspicion of effusion, the feeling of diffidence must change to one of dismay as we approach the subject of "Maud." Fortunately my task is a safely dull one, for I purpose to tell the story of Maud in brief prose.

Many years ago I wrote these words in my copy of "Maud,"—"Tennyson's finest poetry, but worst poem." And, according to Mr. Hutton, "What Maud was meant to be, and was, though inadequately—the failure being due, not to sympathy with hysterics, but to the zeal with which Mr. T. strove to caricature hysterics—was an exposure of hysterics."

Both these opinions I now consider unjust; and the reason why I have chosen a lesson from "Maud" is as follows: I have noticed amongst readers and even lovers of Tennyson a prejudice against this particular poem<sup>1</sup>; and although I cannot on the present occasion make such a review of the monodrama as might remove that prejudice, I will yet, in the short space allotted to me, adopt some more limited mode of treatment that may serve to direct a kindlier attention towards this most original, this wonderful composition.

As usual, we begin by taking a glance at the author's other works. We discover plots more or less similar to this of "Maud" in "The Princess," "Locksley Hall," the "In Memoriam," "Love and

<sup>1</sup> Often connected with some difficulty in tracing the progress of the plot.

Duty"; such plots also are frequent in Shakespeare. For we have the spectacle of a man redeemed by love, and, it may be, purified also by loss. This man is in no wise to be regarded as a caricature, although the poet takes occasion to utter through the lips of such a character his own more daring thoughts, his stronger emotions, and then, as we noticed in the former lesson, to chastise that character, even as for the hundredth time in his writings he will call to account his too outspoken self.

Tennyson, like almost all other great poets, was prophet as well; his potent voice is lifted up sometimes to curse, but oftener to encourage; in this poem, as in the "Locksley Hall's," it is the voice of one crying in the wilderness, "Repent ye!"

And like nearly all other great poets he is patriot too. True also, this, of "Locksley Hall" and "Maud." Does he need some sort of apology?—for they have accused him of jingoism. Well, here is one to begin with, and in his own words:—

" You wrong me, passionate little friend ;  
I would that wars should cease ;  
I would the globe from end to end  
    Might sow and reap in peace. . . .  
And here the Singer for his Art  
    Not all in vain may plead—  
' The song that nerves a nation's heart  
    Is in itself a deed.' "

*Charge of the Heavy Brigade.*

To those who still think, and with show of reason, that in "Maud" they hear too much the angry prophet

or the noisy patriot, and the sweet singer too little, I would specially dedicate the following attempt to indicate the dramatic thread that runs from beginning to end of the poem.

### PART I. SECTION I.

The hero tells his tale of death and villainy ; “and are we not all villains ? And no wonder ; ‘for the jingling of the guinea helps the hurt that Honour feels.’ Better war, loud war, if in peace we murder each other for gold. In such a sordid age I may well be misanthropos, and hate mankind. I am ready to hate Maud.”

### SECTION II.

Maud comes on the scene, and her influence begins to operate at once, for he falls to criticising her.

### SECTION III.

The new influence in Sleep (as in the *In Memoriam*). With one touch of sadness in her beauty she rebukes him for hostile and prejudiced criticism.

### SECTION IV.

Her influence falters for awhile. Springtime and Maud are powerless as yet to redeem such an one, though both flash like a light on his darkness. Moreover, a slight misunderstanding (stanza 3), while it heightens dramatic effect, makes the misanthrope a cynic also ; and in such a mood he will almost mock at his deliverer (stanza 10).

### SECTION V. *Her Voice.*

With wonderful felicity the poet presents her

SINGING—singing a song that will move even him ; a song of the one virtue he recognises—patriotism.

Note the fine art whereby the section begins and ends with “A voice.” By that voice—only thus far—he allows her influence ; and he fights against her influence still.

#### SECTION VI. *Her Smile.*

By way of contrast, nature frowns after a night brightened by her recollected smile. For he still plays with his doubts ; and these give him an occasion (8) to introduce autobiographical grounds for his melancholy. But that smile—he cannot forget it ; and he just realises how different his life *might* be. So this section begins and ends with a smile. (Note the rise and decline of verse and thought in 3).

#### SECTION VII.

The new emotion in his mind calls up an incident of the past, which establishes the hero’s right to make advances. Note the same device in “The Princess.”

#### SECTION VIII.

The next meeting, which borrows a certain charm from surroundings.

#### SECTION IX.

A new character—the rival wooer. Contrast metre of this with former section ; for it indicates a reaction.

#### SECTION X.

Jealousy—indispensable element in a story of love

—quickens the hero's passion and our interest. Once more he turns round on his time to upbraid it. Yet he takes a lesson from Maud (4); begins to change love of self for love of her: "O for a man, a statesman great enough and good enough for me—for Maud" (5); and again self-correction (6), otherwise he would have been extravagant.

### SECTION XI.

"A trembling apprehension always waits  
Our highest joys."

*Shirley.*

This section hints at an arrangement for the next,

### SECTION XII. *The Woodland Meeting.*

The rooks miss Maud, and caw their consternation; the shriller<sup>1</sup> songsters of the wood answer with many a sympathetic trill; the rooks again grow hoarsely anxious, for is not the young lord-lover waiting at the Hall? But Maud's spaniel shows his teeth to the rival, who has come a little too late.

### SECTION XIII.

The course of true love never did run smooth. A first check—her brother. (The miserly father shuns the honest light of day.) As to Maud's mother, she is a reflection of the mother in "The Princess," and of the poet's own mother. A couplet (4) of self-castigation, again, as at end of Section X.

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<sup>1</sup> The low vowel in *Maud* suggests the note of the rooks; the high vowel in *here*, the note of the songsters.

## SECTION XIV.

He surveys the situation, and prepares us for the meeting of XVI. and XVII. (1) Early morning in Maud's garden ; (2) her bower. (3) He has not lost the tendency to analyse emotions ; (compare with "In Memoriam.") (4) He has looked unconcerned on death hitherto ; but now he shudders at sleep, the mere semblance of death ;—now, for he thinks much of Maud, and begins to believe that no man may even die unto himself.

## SECTION XV.

If then Maud has become so dear to him, surely he must make himself worthier—if heavenly grace permit. Here, at least, is a life-duty. (Responsibility of life in its human relationship is twofold : to ourselves, to others.) Further, "Love annihilates self, even while exalting it, and crowns life in a twofold ecstasy of renunciation and attainment"; or thus—

"He doth not love himself aright  
Who doth not love another more."

## SECTION XVI.

In the absence of the brother they meet—but first, one other doubt ; (2) and yet one fear ; (3) "Let not the sight of her beauty bereave me of the power to speak my love."

## SECTION XVII.

*The "Wilt thou?" and "The happy 'Yes.'"*

Here in word-music, quivering with expectant rapture or tremulous with ecstasy beyond the reach

of thought, the poet thrills us into sacred sympathy with the most exquisite emotion of human life.

### SECTION XVIII.

Exquisite word-music again; its keynote is "calming itself." For it tells of tranquil possession of perfect happiness. Contrast rhythm with that of former section. XVII. is as a mountain streamlet hurrying joyously impatient to reach the valley of its desire. XVIII. as a full-flowing river—"Full to the banks, close on the promised good."

In Division 3 of this section the nameless hero takes the natural world into his confidence, and, like the lover in the *Talking Oak* unburdens his heart to a tree; and in (4) he talks calmly to the stars that govern our conditions with an iron tyranny; "Astronomy and Geology, terrible Muses."—*Parnassus*. "What is it all but a trouble of ants in the gleam of a million million of suns?"—*Vastness*. But this "iron hollow of doubtful heaven" can "numb him not or torture not again;"

"For love possessed the atmosphere,  
And fill'd his breast with purer breath . . .  
(Div. 6.) With farther lookings on."

*Miller's Daughter.*

And not only Life, but Death also, is transformed by Love; and Nature in the light of love displays new beauty.

(Division 7.) But fair as may be the everlasting reign of love beyond the grave,

(“And if God will  
I shall but love thee better after death.”

E. B. Browning,

let true life and its true love come first (“In Memoriam,” 85); and in this best way shall the life and love that follows death be truer. Note the emphatic *thou* of the seventh line; for to the *new counsellor*, Maud, he lovingly confides his first doubt.

(Division 8.) “What charm in words, a charm no words could give!” and I must not mar this enchanted and enchanting music with more than just one comment; we notice at the end of the division that the culmination of ecstasy gives the cue for tragedy to enter.

### SECTION XIX.

Two short lines serve to indicate the tragic *turning* (forecast the *catastrophe*). In 2 and 3 we have another apology for the morbid condition of the hero when he first appeared on the stage; 4, 5, renewed justification of his relationship to Maud; in 6, the *villain* of the play; in 7, woman’s kinder, perhaps juster, estimate of man; and Maud, the reconciler, relates an incident that adds deadly pathos to the duel. (“A cry for a brother’s blood;” see Part II. i. 1). In 8 and 9 we witness a mental struggle that ends in a kind result of love, and is moreover introductory to 10.

### SECTION XX.

As in the “In Memoriam,” the trouble is sometimes *transferred*. It is Maud’s turn to be melancholy; and no wonder (compare with incident in “Aylmer’s Field”); the brother has been roughly urging on the

suit of the lord rival. The plainness of her dresses ! Plain to the rival, of course ; but to the lover, perfection. She must wear another dress to-morrow, and entertain, with whatever grace, the villain or the fop. But he too shall see his Maud in "gloss of satin and glimmer of pearls"; and she will be gracious to him.

### SECTION XXI.

How this is to be accomplished.

### SECTION XXII.

First carefully compare this serenade with the one in "The Princess," "Now sleeps the crimson petal." Stanzas 1 and 2 sketch *le lieu de la scène*; 3, the night before the dawn to him who waited; 4 and 5, communings with her flowers; 6, 7, the bulbul and the rose in Gulistan, and the sensations and recollections that follow; 8, in the other serenade the flowers all sleep, here the lilies and roses watch with the watcher; 9, as in "Becket," so here; the lily and the rose are chief among flowers, and are fittest emblems of fairest womanhood; but Maud is "lily and rose in one." "You have but fed on the roses, and lain in the lilies of life."—Maud.<sup>1</sup> The sun is just rising, but to her flowers "Maud" shall be a brighter sun. 10, a sunlit dewdrop shaken from the passion flower of XIV. (1), tells that she is coming: "In a moment we shall meet."<sup>2</sup> After the fitting climax of 11, the curtain falls. It rises again on

<sup>1</sup> And in "In Memoriam" (xcv. 15).

<sup>2</sup> Part II. iv. (6).

## PART II.

in which we discover (1) some return of the old malady, followed (2) by broodings in exile; (3), tells us that Maud has died of a broken heart; (4), is the beautiful lyric round which by accretion the whole poem shaped itself; (5), the delirium of fever, something as in "The Princess."

## PART III.

" So then to love is good, to lose is good,  
If but the loser bow to penance given ;  
Thou wilt have purged the grossness of my blood,  
Thou wilt have taught me look for thee in  
Heaven."

And now the two main motives, love and patriotism, are blended into one redeeming life purpose.

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## IV. A LESSON IN THE LANGUAGE OF POETRY.

## "THE PRINCESS."

POETRY has a language of its own. If, at any time, it resembles the prose of our every-day life, then, as I shall show in one of the following notes (l. 50), it has a purpose in being so written, and is ultimately seen to be poetical, chiefly by contrast with the context. Even thus, moreover, it retains its metrical form.

As is true also of imaginative prose, the diction of poetry will be unfamiliar and pleasantly surprising, though it may vary from the strikingly ornamental

to the strikingly simple. Excess of simplicity may be made to produce much the same effect as excess of ornament ; as in the two following examples :—

- (i.)         “ Like to the Pontic Sea,  
                 Whose icy current and compulsive course  
                 Ne'er feels retiring ebb, but keeps due on  
                 To the Propontic and the Hellespont. . . . ”
- (ii.)         “ One more, one more ;  
                 Be thus when thou art dead, and I will kill thee,  
                 And love thee after. One more, and this the  
                 last.”

*Othello.*

- (i.) “ You cataracts and hurricanoes spout  
                 Till you have drench'd our steeples, drown'd  
                 the cocks ;  
                 You sulphurous and thought-executing fires,  
                 Vaunt-couriers to oak-cleaving thunder-  
                 bolts. . . . ”
- (ii.) “ And my poor fool is hang'd ! No, no, no life !  
                 Why should a dog, a horse, a rat have life,  
                 And thou no breath at all ? Thou'l come no  
                 more,  
                 Never, never, never, never, never.”

*King Lear.*

Each of these pairs of quotations, respectively, is spoken by the same character ; yet what a contrast between the diction of (i.) and (ii.) ; with few exceptions the words of (ii.) in each case are monosyllables, and they are of English origin. For an example of similar diction, see King Arthur's Farewell to

Guinevere, and you will observe that this simple style is well suited for dignity, solemnity, pathos.

We have now to discover in what way the language of poetry differs from the prose of literary art; and we first notice that the two chief elements of this poetical language are those indicated in the following definition of poetry: "Poetry is the Fine Art that expresses emotion or emotional thought in the form of language *definitely* musical and *highly* pictorial." In this definition I make the distinction between poetry and the finer kinds of prose by using the words "definitely" and "highly"; and very important these distinctions are, especially the former. Imaginative prose may not be admitted to the rank of Fine Art, and merely because it lacks this all-beautifying and all-dignifying *form*. In fact, and speaking roughly, the history of poetical composition is nothing more than a record of expedients adopted from time to time in order to reduce to *form* the irregular "sweet music of speech."

Of subtler distinctions between poetry and prose I make no mention here, unless I point to the fact that many of them are too subtle for the mind of man to discover.

Next, in the definition attempted above, no explanation of Fine (or *Æsthetic*) Art was offered; for, as it seems to me, the chief reason why so many definitions of poetry fail is this—they attempt too much. Just as the grammarian who wants to say what grammar is, usually goes out of his way to give a half definition of science as well, so the makers of definitions of poetry mostly exceed their legitimate

intention. We will take Mr. Ruskin for an example. Poetry, he tells us, is "a suggestion, through noble grounds, of noble emotions." This, surely, is a very fair definition, not of poetry in particular, but of Fine Art in general. Or, when Matthew Arnold finds poetry to be "a criticism of life," or, when Mr. J. A. Symonds corrects him with "poetry is not so much a criticism of life as a revelation of life," each of these writers goes beyond the poetic mark, and is taken to task by Robert Browning, who tells us that such opinions are equally true of the painter's art.

Therefore, within the limitations imposed by my definition, it will be my purpose to point out in these notes the chief poetical constituents of a few lines of "The Princess," and thus in some measure to interpret the poet's language.

As we have seen in our other lessons, we must rely on the poet himself, on all he has written, for our chief assistance in this task of interpretation. Some annotators (Beeching, Jerram, and there are many more) respect this principle; but others seem to attach less importance to it; and yet in no other way can we hope to discover all the meaning and the beauty that may be hidden in one word. For example, in the edition of "The Princess" with notes (Macmillan, 1892), we find that the author, Mr. Wallace, assisted by H. T. (the present Lord Tennyson), annotates as follows, the passage—

" Thro' the porch that sang  
All round with laurel " :—

"The laurel is an evergreen shrub with glossy

leaves, commonly used for the decoration of porches and arcades. ‘Sang’ refers to the buzzing of bees and flies which cluster so thickly in laurel-bushes (or more likely to the wind in the bushes. H. T.)”

I should venture to doubt the adequacy of either of these interpretations (and not a few other passages are similarly treated). We might lead up to the connotation of *sang*, etc., with Milton’s

“Fanning their joyous leaves to thy soft lays”; or his

“Airs, vernal airs, . . . attune the trembling leaves,”

which again is echoed in Tennyson’s

“Like the whispers of the leaves  
That tremble round a nightingale.”

*Gardener’s Daughter.*

and in

“Thro’ lands where not a leaf was dumb.”

*In Memoriam.*

Next we notice the symbolism of the laurel (and much of the detail in this description of the college is symbolic)—and we turn to the “In Memoriam” :—

“Go down beside thy native rill,  
On thy Parnassus set thy feet,  
And hear thy *laurel whisper sweet*  
About the ledges of the hill.”

Surely the singing of the laurel in the passage from “The Princess,” and the whispering in this, suggest

the same view, the poetical and other associations of the tree. Compare also—

“ And many an old philosophy  
On Argive heights divinely sang.”<sup>1</sup>

Similarly used is “rang” in the passage (“Princess” l. 121) “rang with tilt and tourney” (*i.e.*, “It was all about fighting”); and not altogether unlike is this,

“ And we with *singing* (poetical composition) cheer’d  
the way.”

*In Memoriam.*

As the bust of Pallas stood above the college entry, and beside it two sphere lamps, the well-known globes, so the bases of the porch were “lost in laurel,” the tree sacred to Apollo. Moreover, classical writers tell us that two laurel trees stood before the gate of the Cæsars.

I will not say that this passage was the best I could have chosen for my purpose; it happened to come first under my eye, and, mindful of Mr. Ruskin, I have dealt with it in some detail. It may serve to show the way in which we may hope to discover

“ All the charm of all the Muses often flowering in a  
lonely word.”

The following notes attempt to indicate the more important kind of help to be given to the learner, and they avoid dictionary information. For I remember that a few years ago “The Princess” was among

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<sup>1</sup> And this—

“ All the lavish hills would *hum*  
The murmur of a happy Pan.”

the English classics set at a public examination. Two questions were asked of the candidates who had been unfortunate enough to prepare the work ; one desired them to explain a number of classical allusions, and the other called for some inartistic information that might have been picked up in any odd five minutes. (The fuller notes begin at l. 59.)

1. *All a summer's day* :—"In amorous ditties all a summer's day" (*Milton*). Thus the poet's "echoes roll from soul to soul."
2. *Broad lawns* :—The broad vowel sounds in these accented monosyllables suggest expanse. Poetry delights in archaisms, but the word *lawns* is a "stock word," and so very much worn that only a great poet could give it dignity now.
- 2, 3, 4, 10. *Set of sun, up, half, me*—all these call for rhetorical or other consideration on the part of the reader.
12. *Heavens* :—We have noticed that the diction of poetry must always, and by whatever means, be unfamiliar ; except under certain modifying conditions a poet may not call a spade a spade ; hence, in part, the use of figures of speech of all kinds. The metaphor (*transferred name, etc.*) "heavens" is more pictorial and suggestive than the land it arches over ; the slight perplexity caused by the transference sets our imagination at work until we discover that the name transferred illustrates and adds beauty. The transference in "first bones of Time" (skeletons of animals of the

earliest periods), and in "clime and age" in l. 16, is more extended, but none the less striking and beautiful. "Clime," for example, is put first for "land," and that, again, for the productions of the land.

*Lovelier than their names* :—If we allow the poet to explain himself, he will direct us to a passage in "*Maud*," Part II., ii. (2).

"What is it? A learned man  
Could give it a clumsy name.  
Let him name it who can,  
The beauty would be the same."

Not from this passage alone, but from many others like it, we may draw a deeper lesson, viz., that "science is like the sun, which reveals the face of earth, but seals and shuts up the face of heaven"; that it is possible for a man to study botany all his life, and end by becoming unable to realise beauty in any flower; while the poet, who knew nothing of botany, would to his last day see, and *see through* the beauty of the simplest blossom.<sup>1</sup>

l. 17. *Jumbled together* :—Here the sound is an echo of the sense; the sense-suggesting word "jumbled," its position in the line, and the general structure of the line, all contribute to the effect. The alliteration in celts, calumet, Claymore, suggests enumeration.

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<sup>1</sup> "To me the meanest flower that blows can give  
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears."

*Wordsworth.*

- l. 19. *Sandal* is poetic for *sandal wood*.
- l. 20. *Laborious, etc.* :—One of the most famous lines in Tennyson's poetry—so famous that I need hardly dwell upon it here.
31. *Who laid about them at their wills and died.*  
An example of the brevity of poetry, and its advantage over prose. In prose the thought would be expressed somewhat after this manner: “Such were the sad old times, when might overcame right; when man was tyrant or slave; when the life business of the tyrant was to fight without any regard to right; nay, more, when his highest ambition was to die fighting,—and his works did follow him. And yet these fighters supplied to our fathers the false first notions of heroism.”
- l. 32. *And, mixt with these, etc.* And if this was the old ideal of heroic man, we might expect that the old ideal of heroic woman would, as usual, be found in some weak imitation of the man; in her being, like him, a mere fighter. This is the moral of the paragraph, “O miracle of women,” in which the chronicler, as sometimes it was in our Anglo-Saxon annals, breaks out into singing. “I must begin at the beginning,” says our poet. “Not once or twice in my history you will find that women seek improvement by copying their oppressors. Patience! I shall lead you on to the time when they will ‘strive to become excellent women rather than indifferent men.’”

l. 40. *Her stature more than mortal* :—Many are the kindred passages in this poet. I will quote one from Wordsworth, “Laodamia” :—

“ While, like the sun emerging from a cloud,  
Her countenance brightens and her eye expands ;  
Her bosom heaves and spreads, her stature grows.”

Note also the poet’s exactness. Sunrise would be the time chosen for making a sally from the beleaguered fortress—ere the enemy was awake.

l. 50. *So sang the gallant glorious chronicle.* This is the last line of martial music. The following four or five lines, but for context, metre, and the expression, “all rapt,” are like prose. Even a parenthesis is added to make the language more matter-of-fact.

l. 56. The most striking metaphors we have yet met with; “sown”—not very possibly with people—but with “faces”? “Sown” with holiday-makers, perhaps, but with the abstract idea of “holiday” standing for the holiday-makers! Further and further removed are these words from the ideas they are made to represent; and again the effect aimed at by the poet, and appreciated by his readers, is realised. (Names of the various varieties of metaphor will be found in books on composition.)

l. 59. *Facts* :—Practical lessons. The next twenty lines furnish an excellent example of Tennyson’s well-known faculty of making what is commonplace poetical. The proceedings he narrates are mostly scientific; yet in no single instance does he fail to transform prose into

poetry. How he does this we shall best discover if we ask ourselves from time to time what would have been the language of a man of science if he were describing to us the same facts.

## POET'S LANGUAGE.

59. *Reared a font.*
61. *Of the moment.*  
*Now . . . now, at one time . . . at another time. Playing*—poetically used with an object.
63. *Steep-up.* A word that like one or two others in this passage recalls to us the lines:  
“Those melodious bursts that fill  
The spacious times of great Elizabeth  
With sounds that echo still.”  
(“Wash me in *steep-down*  
gulfs of liquid fire.”  
                        *Othello.*)
64. *Like a wisp.*

## LANGUAGE OF MAN OF SCIENCE.

- Constructed a cistern.
- Temporary, impromptu, provisional.
- Perpendicular.
- Like a *Will-o'-the-Wisp*, if the similitude were employed at all. Or it might have been

translated into some more scientific form, such as "Ignis Fatuus."

65. *Knobs and wires and vials.* Very good example of the *pictorial* character of poetry; the poet *draws a picture.*
66. *Echo.* Again, "All the charm of all the Muses," etc. Note *answered*, for Juno deprived the nymph of speech, except that she was allowed to *answer* when spoken to. *Hollow*, favourite word with the poet. Cf. "concave shores," *Julius Cæsar*, I., i. 52; and in Tennyson, *Claribel*, "The hollow grot replieth."
68. *Azure* :—  
"The purple from the distance dies."  
"The distance takes a lovelier hue."
- In Memoriam.*
- Galvanic battery.
- The echo could be heard very plainly, for the conformation of the surrounding country was favourable to its production.
- Distant.

"No purple in the distance."

"The other distance, and the hues of promise."

*Princess.*

70. *Dislink'd.* See "steep-up." Unlinked.
72. *And shook the lilies.*  
i.e. "Thus the demon Science invades and desecrates the peaceful and beautiful domain of nature."  
"Science grows, and beauty dwindleth."  
*Locksley Hall*, sixty years after.  
*Knolls.* Archaic. Hillocks.
73. *Angry.* Attribution of human emotion to inanimate object. Sometimes admissible here.
74. *Petty.* Modern sense is "insignificant;" here used in earlier sense of "small." Small model.
75. *Gem-like.* Like a bright jewel.  
*Dusky.* In an evening landscape groups of trees are the first objects to become indistinguishable in the darkness. Com-

pare the beautiful  
passage in this poem,  
VII. 33, 34,  
“And broader-grown,  
the bowers  
Drew the great night in-  
to themselves.”

76. *Fairy.*

*Past.* Perhaps the most decidedly poetical element in all these lines. Often beautifully used in this way by Tennyson (without following adverb).

“But Sir Aylmer past.”  
“She, and with her, the race of Aylmer, past.”

*Aylmer's Field.*

Other examples occur in this poem. Sometimes the word is equivalent to *died*, as commonly in Cornwall ; and in this line of the “In Memoriam,” “He past ; a soul of nobler tone.”

77. *Twenty posts of telegraph.*

Fairy-like (if used at all).  
Passed on.

78. *Saucy.* See “angry.”

Telegraph wires stretched over several posts.

80. *Otherwhere*. Archaic. In other parts of the park.
81. "With clamour bowled As the exact prose equivalent, I would suggest,  
and stump'd the  
wicket." "Making plenty of noise, a lot of young-  
sters *bowled at the wicket, and stumped the batsman.*"
- Most interesting this; even for the language of cricket some poetical equivalent is discovered. Compare
- "A something pottle-bodied boy  
Who *knuckled at the taw.*"
- Will Waterproof.*

This will end the comparison between the language of the poet and that of the man of science. Our lesson from "The Princess" must now close with a brief examination of the other, the musical element in poetry, as exemplified in lines 84-88.

First note the onomato-poetic word "twangling"; also the sense-echoing line, "Made noise with bees and breeze from end to end," which reminds us of Milton's, "Brush'd with the hiss of rustling wings. As bees."

Next, of these five lines, the first three are quick in movement; the last two, slow. This, as usual, to suit the sense. The quick movement is effected by short vowels, light and varied accents, and an extra syllable (l. 86); the slow movement by the opposite to all this, and by the monosyllables of l. 88. Again, the pitch in the first three is high; in the last two, much

lower ; and this, once more, to suit the theme. Alliteration and assonance throughout are subtle and appropriate.

In conclusion, I would now say to every student of poetry, Do not imagine that my work or your work ends with such suggestions as the above. If I have indicated some of the devices by which the poet makes his work beautiful, whether they be akin to music in the metre, or to painting in the language, these, after all, are on the surface ; and you must search for deeper charms that defy intellectual analysis, charms that disclose themselves only to the mental eye and the spiritual ear. Much also will depend upon the spirit in which you study the poet ; for

“ You must love him, ere to you  
He will seem worthy of your love.”

You must meet him half-way ; you must answer his appeal by cultivating and exercising your own poetic powers until, working downwards as it were, you unbuild all the fabric of his fancy, and, better still, working upwards, you try to build like him. Thus shall this highest art have power over you to delight and to ennable, and you perchance have power upon a weary world to bless it with some new joy.

## PART II.

### *TENNYSON AND HIS REVIEWERS.*

#### INTRODUCTION.

ABOUT the beginning of December, 1892, the author delivered in Bristol three lectures. These lectures, suggested by the numerous reviews of Lord Tennyson that had recently appeared, dealt with the poet in his three aspects of Epic, Dramatic, and Lyric artist. One lecture is printed in full ; from the other two a few extracts have been made.

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#### LECTURE I.

##### TENNYSON AS AN EPIC POET.

A FEW weeks ago Lord Tennyson lay waiting for his magnificent burial. Since that solemn time many reviews of the life and writings of the great poet have appeared in the public press ; and it is my intention in these lectures to make comments on one of these reviews, with perhaps an occasional reference to some others.

Now, I venture to think that many of the recent

critics of the late laureate have allowed zeal for his fame or love of his memory to blunt their sense of the honour due to other great masters of song. If, therefore, I seem harsh, or even unjust, in some of my remarks, I must ask you to say of me, "It was not that he loved Tennyson less, but that he loved Shakespeare and Milton more."

Indeed, my lectures may very well begin with a caution. For in the obituary notice that I have brought with me, I find Lord Tennyson bracketed with Shakespeare no less than four times; and as to Milton, he *is* included in the list of eight other poets who have won the writer's favour; but with this exception, no mention is made of him. I may notice, also, by the way, that no Greek tragedian, no Latin poet is amongst the eight. The Byron, who was Tennyson's first love, and the Browning, to whose "genius and geniality" (unhappy quibble) the wonderful *Tiresias* volume is dedicated, they, of course, could have no place where Vergil was omitted; and what the Germans would say at finding no Goethe in the list, or the French when they saw no Victor Hugo there, I leave you to guess.

Now I wish strongly to protest against this careless use of Shakespeare's name, and this equally careless omission of Milton's; and remember, I speak of a prevailing tendency. In spite of our modern aversion to comparative criticism, I shall be bold enough to assert that we English possess two poets of the very first class, and only two—Shakespeare and Milton; and if we graduate the scale evenly, we shall probably find *no poet at all to place in the second class*, although

there are several who may take rank in a third. But this, you will say, is going too far. I do not think so. However, Chaucer, Spenser, Lord Tennyson and the rest shall form a second class, if you will; and further, if you will, Lord Tennyson shall rank first in that second class. I shall be content, provided I check this tendency of our time to forget Milton, and to degrade Shakespeare. Degrade is exactly the word. Would you believe such appalling ignorance as this exhibited by a recent critic of some repute:—“Shakespeare,” he said, “and Sheridan, our two great dramatists.”<sup>1</sup>

By a similar fad of modern criticism, another critic of higher repute prefers “Comus” to “Paradise Lost,” and the “Faerie Queene” to either. I am sure you will not wish me to make any further comment on such strange notions.

And why, it will be asked, are Shakespeare and Milton the two, and the only two, very great poets in our English literature? To answer that question fully would be impossible here. For although I intend to examine Tennyson’s claim to poetic greatness under the three heads of Epic, Dramatic, and Lyric poetry—and in this order—I shall nevertheless say little or nothing that is not suggested to me in the pages of this review as I turn them over. I will, however, briefly explain, that word, image, foot, line, stanza, song, epic, drama, and the rest are some of them structural elements in forms of poetical

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<sup>1</sup> Apart from other differences, the difference of *form* is beyond calculation.

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expression, and some of them forms of poetical expression in themselves—the epic and the drama<sup>1</sup> being the greatest of these forms. Now I will call your attention to one quality of the best work produced by the two artists, Shakespeare and Milton; it is on the largest, the grandest scale. In certain works of art, magnitude contributes most of all to the sum total of pleasing impressions; conversely, to create on this great scale is often the highest effort and the highest achievement of genius.

But the grandeur of the whole lends grandeur to each part. This incidental remark is not exactly a step in the direction of my argument, yet I am glad that the words have been uttered, for they give me an opportunity of telling you something that came under my notice a few years ago—a phenomenon that does bear directly on my argument. Well, it was this: literary experts and others were invited to send to the *Contemporary Review* their favourite passages of poetry. To the editor's hand there came extracts from almost any English poet—if I may trust my memory—except Shakespeare and Milton. I seem to remember also that the modern poets were most in favour, and that if Shakespeare was represented two or three times, scarcely any contributor cared to take a few lines from Milton. I cannot understand this. I should have thought there was really no choice in the matter. Two pieces, as I

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<sup>1</sup> The question whether under ordinary circumstances drama is a fit subject for poetic treatment is dealt with in the second lecture.

think, were sent up by each authority. What could one possibly be supposed to do in such a case other than select from Shakespeare—it might be the storm-scene in Lear, the dialogue between Othello and Iago, or that between Brutus and Cassius; and from Milton, the Morning Hymn of Adam and Eve, the description of Eden, Satan's address to the Sun, and so forth. Now, if we choose the marvellous storm-scene in Lear, or the Morning Hymn—for which no epithet is found in earthly language—we do this, as I have suggested already, not only because the part is excellent in itself, but also, and much more, because it borrows wondrous strength and beauty from every other part, and from the magnificent total of scheme and scope. Stupendous was the genius that created "King Lear" and "Paradise Lost." There were giants on the earth in those days.

That Tennyson knew what was required of a very great poet, is evident from the outset. He began his Epic in good time; the first fragment, "Morte d'Arthur," being published in 1842, and it had been in course of composition probably from a much earlier date; and although his dramas came very late, they were written with determination, and soon multiplied.

But if the young poet had made up his mind to attempt the highest poetic achievement by writing epic and drama, it seems equally clear that from the first he distrusted his capability of doing either. To use his own words, he had "a mint of reasons" for this. Later on he styled the first four books of his epic, "Idyls," a title implying, amongst other things,

that these four stories (now known as the third, fifth, sixth, and tenth) were more or less disconnected. This lack of epic completeness I shall refer to again.

As to Tennyson's dramatic works, they were at first monologues, monodramas, and the like experiments; or were such as "The Princess," "Medleys," full of the poet's apologies.

The same hesitation to attempt a very great work of artistic oneness may be traced in many other poems; for example, in the isolated sections of the "In Memoriam," where again apologies are numerous, and where we discover the significant utterance,

"Nor dare she trust a larger lay. . . ."

After doing full justice to the context, we cannot, whether in this work or in others, help reading the line as one amongst many of like import. Even "Maud," the most successful of his earlier dramatic efforts, was constructed in a tentative, desultory manner, and the various editions of the poem prove that the author was for some time uncertain as to the real character of what he had created.

Now, comparatively speaking, nothing is easier than to write a poem on a small scale (hence the lyric has always ranked lowest), or a poem that may end anywhere and anyhow, or that never ends at all; poems—but again, perhaps, I ought to crave your indulgence if in my respect for our two great masters I cast a careless eye on lesser artists; indeed, I am about to make a terrible onslaught on all such)—poems like the "Canterbury Tales" (never finished),

"Artistry's haunting curse, the incomplete"

(though I do not wish to apply this quotation too closely); poems such as the "Faerie Queene" (again, never finished), "The Essay on Man" (always a puzzle to its author), "The Excursion" (part of a poem never finished), "Don Juan" (which, if it "begins with a beginning," can hardly be said to end with an ending), "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage" (a unique example of vacillating composition), "Endymion" (a series of "rich windows that exclude the light"), "The Revolt of Islam" ("and passages that lead to nothing"), the "In Memoriam" (to which critics alone have given shape—

"If shape it could be called, that shape had none")<sup>1</sup>; poems that were, so to speak, "allowed to write themselves," being more or less prolix, diffuse, pieces of patchwork, wanting proportion, lacking the well-known essentials of beginning, middle, and end, the end seen from the beginning, adjustment of parts to the magnificent whole, composite harmony; and of course they lack also vastness, *they lack stupendous, concentrated, sustained, and successful effort*, and with that they lack grandeur.

Possibly this, if I remember rightly, is what Mr. Alfred Austin<sup>2</sup> meant to say (but did not say) when he denied greatness to Tennyson, because our poet

<sup>1</sup> This opinion received remarkable corroboration in the *Nineteenth Century*, January, 1893, where we find Tennyson's own words: "The general way of its being written was so queer that if there were a blank space, I would put in a poem."

<sup>2</sup> "Poetry of the Period."

did not love or did not write about mountains, whereas Byron did, and Byron was therefore a great poet.

Even if Tennyson's "King Arthur" satisfied some of the requirements of a great epic poem, the fact that it was at first tentative, was so long in hand, tells terribly against it. Making due allowance for change of theme, we seem to discover as much difference in point of style between the superb "Morte d'Arthur" and "Pelleas and Ettarre" as between "Paradise Lost" and "Paradise Regained"; and of course Books I. to XII. of "Paradise Lost" exhibit the same "unfailing level of style"; the whole sublime poem being, in fact, wrought out by the blind poet in about six years.

Again, the change in style is all for the worse. "Morte d'Arthur" was written while Tennyson still believed, and rightly, that Scott, Byron, and even Shelley had exhausted the charm of somewhat lawless vigour, and that the perfect form of Keats was to be the new and successful manner in poetry. He placed himself in later years just a little under the influence of Browning and Whitman, for example.

It is a change, moreover, that we witness in most poets whose period of authorship is long—notably in Shakespeare and Milton. Compare, for example, "Julius Cæsar" with "The Tempest," or "Paradise Lost" with "Samson Agonistes." It comes of many years, the desire and need of change, weariness of struggle between impetuous thought and prescribed art form; it is a change that *sometimes* verges on license, not freedom; on decrepitude, dotage, disso-

lution ; it interrupts, for example, with extra syllables, the stately movement of the blank verse :—

“ And so went back, and seeing them yet in sleep,  
Said, ‘ Ye that so dishallow the holy sleep.’ ” . . .

These two consecutive lines from “ Pelleas and Ettarre ” would have been impossible in the “ Morte d’Arthur.” Or if we except them as forming a kind of couplet, and as having a rhythm peculiar to themselves, I will choose the following two from the immediate context,—

“ Fingering at his sword-handle until he stood . . .  
And the sword of the tourney across her throat . . .”

Many others you can find for yourselves in the same two short paragraphs ; so many, that, as before, making allowance for a lighter theme, we may yet reasonably regard the blank verse of the later poem as something quite different from that of the “ Morte d’Arthur,” and as marking a tendency towards undue license.

The same phenomenon is seen when we compare “ Locksley Hall ” with “ Locksley Hall Sixty Years After ” ; and, more generally, in the many lighter measures of the Laureate’s later poems.

The defence set up by the reviewer, that we must consider the “ Idyls ” as a modern Faerie Queene, serves finally to establish my conclusion, that if the chief test of a poet’s greatness be greatness, the production, we will say, of at least one very great and perfect work, then Tennyson fails to rank as a poet of the very first order ; we may not concede

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to him superlative grandeur, unfaltering strength, nor, as in Shakespeare's case, the freshness also of unconscious genius.

Next to this test of greatness, I place that of originality ; and, tried by this, Tennyson is great indeed. I should first explain that the chief essential of art beauty is pleasing surprise ; and there are three processes by which the artist is able to introduce himself, or the evidence of his individual genius, into his work ; viz. selection, exclusion, arrangement. Let me illustrate this from Tennyson's own experience. When a very young poet, he is content with the manner of Byron, or Keats, or some other ; but before long all such recognised types of poetical expression fail to satisfy his genius, and he must needs construct a new instrument of utterance for himself. Now it is the *right measure* of deviation or innovation that marks great genius ; the lesser artist —Whitman and Tupper always, Wordsworth and Browning often—fails to express himself in such forms of novel beauty as may satisfy not only his own needs, but also the conditions of his time ; and thus he abuses the licensed play of variety within uniformity. The words “right measure” are nearly equivalent to “good taste.” Whitman and Tupper, however, are examples so extreme as to be scarcely available in this connection ; and as the writings of Whitman are still often called poetry, I may perhaps be pardoned if in a few words I attempt to show you that they are not. Good prose I know, and good poetry I know ; good prose has rhythm that may be likened

"To an Æolian harp, that wakes  
*No certain air*, but overtakes  
 Far thought with music that it makes."

But just as in music we do not rest content with the Æolian harp, so in literature we tire of merely melodious prose; for it lacks the most important element of all art-beauty, viz. *form*.<sup>1</sup> The rhythm of poetry, then, is definitely regulated; it contains the element of time in addition to that of tune, of form in addition to that of substance (here compare the novel and the *poetic drama*<sup>2</sup>); and the name we give to this *restraining* and *harmonising* form is "metre." This is equally true of music; and should the artist, whether poet or musician, refuse to adjust his utterance to the wholesome restraint of form, he destroys the art element altogether; if poet, he is guilty of reversion to sing-song prose; and such are the writings of Whitman.

From this digression, I return to the subject of taste; and few poets, I must add, or none, have shown more exquisite taste than Tennyson, few or none have created new forms of expression so many and beautiful.

This leads me to mention a third test of a poet's greatness; viz. the relation between his emotions, and thoughts, and the means and modes of their expression. But of this I shall treat under the head of Lyrical poetry. And yet, before passing on, allow

<sup>1</sup> See also p. 41.

<sup>2</sup> This explains my remark on the comparing of Shakespeare with Sheridan.

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me to remark that in Tennyson this relation is usually as perfect as possible, and that we miss only spontaneity, unconsciousness; for, as Mr. Swinburne tells us, "The mark of painstaking as surely lowers the level of style as any sign of negligence." You will easily be able to illustrate this for yourselves by comparing Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind" with almost any of the lyrics of Tennyson. Further, in much of the latter poet's early work, the relation between expression and thought resembles that of clothes to body, but throughout his more mature creations it is rather that of body to soul—of which two we may add, each has called the other into existence, and each for existence depends upon the other.

I will not do more than name at random a few of the many remaining qualities that contribute to a poet's relative greatness. Some of them are comprehended within the three already mentioned:—charm, wisdom, humanity, refinement, high truth and deep seriousness, spirituality, patriotism, variety, learning, workmanship, faithful and new depiction and interpretation of nature, ideal rendering of the real, and many more. All of these qualities Tennyson possesses in abundance. Further, no poet was ever more faithfully, or more usefully, the mirror of his age (p. 20). Again, he is an excellent story-teller. But some of these excellencies will be noticed in their proper place; meanwhile the reviewer has compelled me rather to deal with the Laureate's imperfections.

His chief weakness—if I may be allowed the para-

dox—is “weakness”; even in his charm we often find a softness which sometimes suggests want of strength, and is akin to effeminacy. Bulwer Lytton was not altogether at fault when he called our poet “Miss Alfred,” and spoke of him as “out-babying Wordsworth.” This, for example, is a babyism of Wordsworth’s:—

“ One morning, raw it was, and wet,  
A foggy day in winter time. . . .”

And this the out-babying by Tennyson:—

“ I stood on a tower in the wet  
As the old and the new year met. . . .”

The following line, I think, occurs in the Arthurian poems:—

“ What go ye into the wilderness to see ? ”

And this in the “May Queen”:—

“ I thought to pass away before, and yet alive I am. . . .”

I might multiply such examples, but let me refer only to a poem well known to all my audience: “Crossing the Bar.” Even in this, an ultra-critical eye might detect the element of weakness; for example, the lyric is indebted to Charles Kingsley and to Shakespeare for a small portion of its beauty and pathos, and some of its phrases have been used by the poet before. As to the inconsistent metaphor of the “Pilot” and the “flood,” well, although the poem is a short poem, and ought, therefore, to be beyond suspicion, and although its author is a writer

so careful in this respect that we think we have some sort of right to find him flawless—I know only two really reprehensible examples of confused metaphor in all his work—in spite of this, we may reasonably put these figures in the same conventional class with the following :—

“And we will live like two birds in one nest.”

In poetry the letter may be falsehood, while the spirit is beauty and wisdom ; and I am not prepared to assert that my criticism of this divine song is quite in earnest ; but it serves my purpose if I now speak of it as the extreme of reaction against excessive and unthinking laudation ; and to put you on your guard against all such extremes is the main object of my lecture.

As a parting suggestion, let me add that if you care to realise for yourselves the surpassing excellence of Tennyson’s workmanship, compare carefully his song, “Home they brought her warrior dead” with some lines on the same theme in “The Lay of the Last Minstrel,” canto i., section ix.; and even when you have made in favour of Scott all necessary allowances, you will probably be astonished at the superior finish and taste displayed in the work of the later poet.

Just now I was directing your attention to Tennyson’s striking originality ; but I forebore to point out, from the many thousands, some one constituent element of that originality, because any such example would serve equally well to illustrate my present subject. From among the five or six hackneyed

turns of expression in these lines by Scott, I will select for your guidance this one, viz. "did seek." Now, such a poetical past indefinite tense may, according to conditions of date, context, and the rest, be either a beauty or a blemish, and chiefly on this account; the law by which the comely hat of one year is condemned as the hat hideous of another year, operates also in the region of poetical devices. In our earlier literature this "did" tense, though perhaps employed to excess in Spenser and the younger Shakespeare, is usually in good taste. Milton makes it beautiful in "*Lycidas*"; Pope condemns it; by his time it has become "out of fashion." Yet Gray uses it with peculiar grace; smaller poets at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries rendered it repulsive; it is a blemish in this passage from Scott; Tennyson revived its use; once more it was made to produce the effect of "pleasing surprise." In these lines from "*Mariana in the Moated Grange*," it is charming—nay, bewitching:—

"When thickest dark *did* trance the sky . . .  
For leagues no other tree *did* mark . . .  
The poplar made, *did* all confound . . ."

Nothing, again, could be more beautiful than the employment of this word in the "*Lotos Eaters*," although there it is appropriate rather as echoing Spenser and Thomson. On the same principle we justify and admire Mr. Swinburne's revival of—not systematic, but—abundant alliteration.

This comparison of Tennyson with Scott gives me

an opportunity of introducing the subject of Plagiarism, which the reviewer, who is responsible for these comments of mine, deals with in rather a summary fashion ; and he shows but little respect for Mr. Churton Collins ; though why critics who dwell upon the "letter that may be falsehood" should, *of course*, be dead to the "spirit that quickeneth," I do not quite see. And here let me repeat, "it is not that I love Tennyson less, but that I love Shakespeare and Milton more" ; and here let me add, "that I love truth most." Having the truth, therefore, as my motive, I proceed briefly to acquaint you with my impressions of Tennyson as plagiarist.

I should first remark that plagiarism is a relative term ; that is to say, a small poet is much more liable to the charge of poaching in the preserves of literature than is a greater poet. For example, when, in the "In Memoriam," Tennyson recalled Shakespeare (*Hamlet*) :—

"And from his ashes may be made  
The *violet* of his native land,"

he was not careful so much as to change the name of the flower. Our latter-day poet knew his powers and his consequent rights, and no man need trouble himself to dispute them.

But when at the outset of my studies I discovered that many of the most important additions and improvements in later editions of "The Princess" might be traced to Shelley, Milton, or Wordsworth, I was set thinking ; for there is some sort of difference between a suggestion from another writer that ap-

pears as an organic growth, and the same suggestion when it occurs as an interpolation. My reflections, however, ended by acquitting our poet on the ground of general greatness. But again, when, in the year 1884, I read the Laureate's letter to Mr. Dawson, I was filled with dismay. You may know the French proverb, "Qui s'excuse, s'accuse"; well, it is painfully true of this letter<sup>1</sup>—written, alas! "quite contrary to my custom." The first remarkable fact about the letter is that we find in it, from first to last, apologies—anxious, nervous, excessive, inconsistent apologies. The writer gives us these reasons for the appearance of the songs in "The Princess"; first, he deliberates with himself as to whether he shall put songs in or not; next, he thinks the poem will explain itself; but the public did not see that the child was the heroine; next, again, he *conquered his laziness*, and inserted them. Then we hear in a curious way of a certain song, which by itself proves that his poem has a heroine—the child; he forgets the words, but thinks he has it somewhere. He does mention the author's main work, viz., the explanatory notes, but in the same sentence and the same breath he drags in the subject of parallel passages; has no objection to Mr. Dawson's finding parallelisms; very likely not, for Mr. Dawson found scarcely any of them; the mischief had been done long before. Then we have a very characteristic exposition of plagiarism,

<sup>1</sup> As of plagiarism generally; all poets must borrow to some extent—the imitative, reflective, literary poets most of all. It is not the borrowing, but elaborate and scarcely plausible excusation that we should complain of.

and then the saddening sequel. I have not time to follow it sentence by sentence, on to the conclusion that the man and the poet is much greater than his pitiful words of deprecatory prose. Let us be thankful that it is so. I assure you that never in any literature have I met with anything more sad, more humiliating than this letter ; indeed, I hasten to repeat, word for word, the second half of my sentence, "The man and the poet is much greater than his pitiful words of deprecatory prose ;" and again, we may be profoundly thankful that this is so.

Akin to this defect is the tendency common to some other poets to indulge in self-depreciation, to be a little careful about early poems, to point to their early date, to date them indefinitely, and so forth. We have, for example, "The Dead Prophet," 182-, the last figure being omitted ; we have in the prefatory notice to the "Lover's Tale," "19th year," "omissions and amendments that would have been made," "misprints of the compositor." Again, in the note prefixed to "The Window," "*whose almost only merit is perhaps* that it can dance to Mr. Sullivan's music." So the "Morte d'Arthur" was introduced to us as "faint Homeric echoes, nothing worth." "Becket" was "not intended in its present form to meet the exigencies of our modern theatre."

To sum up, I recollect scarcely any reference made by the poet to his poems<sup>1</sup> that does not appear

<sup>1</sup> Since this Lecture was delivered, I have read Mr. Knowle's Reminiscences, "Aspects of Tennyson, II.," *Nineteenth Century*, January, 1893. Here I find careful note of the fact that the respective poems of the three brothers may never be identified ;

artificial, over-sensitive, or unnecessarily apologetic. I have already noticed the "genius and geniality" in the "Tiresias" dedication. Alas! that such an artist should have cared to "gild refined gold." But, as a last word here, I may tell you that Tennyson when writing prose was like Garrick off the stage—"acting." Akin, again, are the poet's lamentations over the disadvantages of time and place and race:—

"What hope is here for modern rhyme . . . ."  
"A tongue-tied poet in the feverous days . . . ."

days of hurry and worry that will not let a singer compose at his will like

"Old Virgil, who would write ten lines, they say  
At dawn, and lavish all the golden day  
To make them wealthier in his readers' eyes."

Many similar passages I could quote to you, but I forbear; and we shall all be relieved by remembering that our poet is said to have spent a day over a few lines of "Maud"; and let us be deeply thankful that his genius was in reality "rich, patient, spiritual."

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that none of the authors had been beyond their native county;\* that of twenty-six misprints, the publisher would correct only seven; that the mad scene in "Maud" was written in twenty minutes, and had been accounted the finest thing of the kind out of Shakespeare. Profoundly interesting is the note on the construction of "In Memoriam." In the same article the reader will meet with other kindred and significant remarks, especially those on adverse criticism, for which I cannot find space here.

\* "While he has never yet set foot beyond his native county, his mind has travelled."—*John Service.*

Tennyson's one weakness is "weakness"; such was my remark when I began that examination of the epic which led to this series of comments. Shall we say that this occasional weakness is found only in literary expression—that it has no part in the artist himself? Yes, indeed; *the man* is greater than his work. And yet we may be set musing by such a sentence as this in the review before me: "The quiet was the strength of victory; we felt in it the steady, untroubled, certain gaze of one whose eye had actually pierced the doubt, and rested in tranquil security on the faith beyond." I am not sure that we may discover in Tennyson the "calm of mind, all passion spent," that seems to possess the author of "The Tempest," and, though in quite another way, the author of "Samson Agonistes."

"What use to brood? this life of mingled pains  
And joys to me  
Despite of every faith and creed, remains  
The mystery."

*Tennyson to Mary Boyle.*

Truth is an everlasting seeking. I will not complain if the seeker be sometimes querulous—or be querulous to the end; but I should wish it to be known that if Shakespeare "left life a riddle to the last," so Tennyson left it.

What shall I say of the death-bed scene? not much, on an occasion like this. I added the word "ultra" to my criticism of "Crossing the Bar"; I shall speak with wistful reverence now. But the trumpet gives out such uncertain sound; and I put

it to you : shall the book we clasp in our dying hands be the Bible or Shakespeare? You did not put it to yourselves in that way ? I thought not. The old order changeth. Alas ! how could the poet of nineteenth-century uncertainty have clung to the other volume ?

“ Man in his weakness needs a stronger stay  
Than fellow-men, the noblest or the best,  
And yet we turn to them from day to day  
As if in them our spirits could find rest.  
Gently untwine our childish hands that cling  
To such inadequate supports as these. . . . ”

At least he loved the “ *Cymbeline* ” he knew so well, even when, as a mere youth, he wrote :—

“ The wild swan’s death-hymn *took* the soul  
Of that waste place with joy.”

With yet deeper reverence I ask you, did you miss from that circle round the dying bed one whose holy ministrations might have seemed meet for the poet who had written—

“ Pray for my soul. More things are wrought by prayer  
Than this world dreams of.”

Once more I would remind my audience that whatever I may say is suggested by the reviewer whose pages I am following ; and in these pages, as was before said, Tennyson is compared with Shakespeare no less than four times. In other reviews, moreover, so far as I can remember, the two poets are nearly always to be found together, sooner or later.

We are requested to regard them as equal in this, or similar in that, or identical in something else. I confess to you at once that, to my thinking, there is no point of similarity between them.

Ought they not rather to be contrasted at all points? Birth, education, temperament, the times, the circumstances, made Shakespeare a creative, Tennyson an imitative poet. Shakespeare recalls other writers but seldom, and repeats himself seldom or never; Tennyson, as we all know, turns out bright and new from his mint not a little of the old literary coin; and he repeats himself far more frequently than any other writer I have met with. Shakespeare's best style is the maximum of artlessness with the minimum of artifice; Tennyson's the maximum of artifice with sometimes the minimum of artlessness—the artifice, if concealed, being concealed consciously. Marvellous spontaneity marks the utterance of the first, the utmost deliberation that of the second.

One writer of a magazine article tells us that only Shakespeare can rival Tennyson in respect of diction; but surely the diction of Shakespeare is impromptu, unexpected, fresh even to ruggedness; whereas Tennyson's is studied, polished, precise even with the precision of Horace. A like marvellous spontaneity is the crowning excellence of the imagery of Shakespeare; Tennyson's figures may "smell of the lamp," or suggest the commonplace book. The exigencies of that rude Elizabethan theatre brought into being the picturesqueness, the dramatic vigour and reality of the Elizabethan playwright; the gorgeous modern stage made such virtues impossible to the author of

"Queen Mary." And so I might go on, balancing sentence against sentence, until you were utterly weary. My remarks, therefore, shall be confined to the resemblances discovered by this particular critic ; and of Tennyson as dramatist there will be much more to tell in another place. "*In the gift of the mighty line he is also of Shakespeare's kin. No poet could ever put more into a line than he.*" Surely this is going too far ! The blank verse of "Lucretius" is original and magnificent, truly magnificent ; and by those who care to make such comparisons, it may be said to claim kindred with Shakespeare's in its variety, freedom of movement, and its strength ; but I venture to dispute the statement that "no poet ever put more into a line." That

"Mighty-mouth'd inventor of harmonies,  
God-gifted, organ voice of England, . . . ."

whom we hear in "Paradise Lost," was he ever listened to by this critic ? If not, let him compare almost any hundred lines of "Paradise Lost" even with the sonorous measures of the "Morte d'Arthur,"<sup>1</sup> and he will probably admit that in regard to fulness and body of sound, and "infinite grandeur and mystery of sound as well," Milton is, at least, not inferior to his pupil.

"*In the simple lyric, . . . Tennyson has no rival but Shakespeare.*" One might as well compare Tennyson's sonnets with the sonnets of Milton. The

<sup>1</sup> I have already contrasted a certain degeneracy of the verse of the later Arthurian poems with the almost unvarying magnificence of the rhythms of "Paradise Lost."

"wood-notes wild," heard now and then in Shakespeare's plays, again, possess that rare quality of freshness and spontaneity; and lovely they are, or deeply pathetic according to their dramatic setting; but I should hesitate to compare them with Tennyson's, say, in the "Promise of May," where the songs are excellent. Apart from drama, I make no comparison at all. "*Has any song, even Mr. Swinburne's, most witching cadences. . . .*" Did the reviewer ever satisfy his soul with the more than earthly cadences of the songs in "Comus"? *And, indeed, we have again no one but Shakespeare with whom to compare the wonderful comprehensiveness of Tennyson's power.* From "The Lotos-Eaters" to "The Northern Farmer," there alone is a sufficiently suggestive measurement. "Tithonus" and the "Northern Farmer" used to be printed side by side, and I think it was an Edinburgh reviewer who suggested that this association of the two poems was no mere accident. "Tithonus" is original, and perfectly beautiful; and when contrasted with the rougher death-scene, be-speaks wide range of poetic power or "comprehensiveness" as we find it in Tennyson. The same may be said of "The Lotos-Eaters"; but this is not "comprehensiveness" as I understand it in Shakespeare, in whom, indeed, we have a "criticism of life" not only as comprehensive as life itself, but also as *living* as life itself. Dialect, moreover, is a kind of falsetto, not fair as a test of comprehensiveness; like parody, it produces the most striking effect with the least expenditure of effort; many young poets cover their faces with this mask of dialect—from

Shakespeare, let us say, to Rudyard Kipling, they laugh or they screen their beardless chins behind it. It gave Burns an enormous advantage: "Her 'prentice han' she tried on man"; this rhyme, and therefore this line (and you will find other instances in the same song), would have been forbidden to the artificer in literary English. Therefore I am not greatly struck by the contrast of dialect. I may be surprised that the author of "The Two Voices" should also be the author of "Maud." I am surprised, I am filled with wonder, admiration, and delight at the degree in which "Locksley Hall Sixty Years After" recalls the charm of "Locksley Hall."

This comparison between Shakespeare and Tennyson I now dismiss with the inquiry,—Surely the reviewer might have found his resemblances in almost any other poet than the one great creator of poetic drama? unless the comparison were limited to that species of composition. For, as I need hardly remind you, when Tennyson had well-nigh finished his easier task, the Epic, then, *and not till then*, he took up the more difficult—Drama.

And now, with a few farewell words to our first subject, the Epic, this Lecture will draw to its conclusion.

I have been compelled in the cause of truth and justice sometimes to ponder over, sometimes to question, sometimes to combat opinions expressed, as it seems to me, without discretion. That duty performed, I may with equal justice make my closing words no less earnest words of approbation.

Although the Arthurian poems lack the great-

ness and the oneness of "Paradise Lost," they may nevertheless be regarded as combining to form an epic, for they all lead to one tragic, solemn, divine close.

Note also the greatness of the parts ; such a work as "Guinevere" is a veritable epic in miniature. Let "Paradise Lost" be our great epic still, and next to that place our one other—our "King Arthur." Nor would I sanction this measuring of the Idylls by the "Faerie Queene." No one can love more than I do the "mazy murmuring" of Spenser's great poem ; but in a language like ours (as Shakespeare and Milton had the genius to discover), rhyme alone—to say nothing of stanza<sup>1</sup>—is fatal to the dignity of a *very great* poem ; it is too persistently obvious as a structural expedient ; it cannot be disguised ; the bone-frame of such metrical devices will stick out here and there, however much you may try to cover it with the flesh and form of rhythm ; it makes impossible the finer and larger phrasing of blank verse, the law beyond the law.

We have all heard how Milton was attracted to the subject of "King Arthur," and how the conditions of his time and his temperament compelled him to abandon it ; and to Tennyson was left the proud privilege of creating not only our second Epic, but also what so many others of his predecessors had attempted, or thought of attempting, our National Epic ; and in such measure he has become what many critics with more show of truth have styled him, our modern Vergil.

<sup>1</sup> Unless the stanzas be short and interlaced.

## LECTURE II.

## TENNYSON AS A DRAMATIC POET.

(Extract.)

THE reviewer now refers to Lord Tennyson's inability to write successful dramas. Let me first remark that much of this criticism about Tennyson and the drama was to be met with long before the poet had written a single play, much less had attempted to put one on the boards of a theatre. In this respect I think he has suffered injustice, both from reviewers and from the public. On the other hand, was it worth his while to attempt this poetic drama? Possibly not, as we shall see later on. At least, I cannot admit the defence set up by the critic before me, that "*if Tennyson lacks power to produce technically perfect poetic drama, he lacks it with Homer and Dante against whom it is never urged that they did not write in dramatic forms.*" This is surely absurd; first, these poets satisfy our test of greatness; apart from drama, each produced a perfect work on the grandest scale; second, they did not attempt drama, and, therefore, we bring no charge of dramatic weakness against them. On the other hand, had Milton persisted in his first intention, and thrown "Paradise Lost" into dramatic form ("Samson Agonistes" does not concern us), and failed to satisfy dramatic requirements, he would have paid the penalty of being placed one or two classes lower; but his superb poetic instinct preserved him from that fate.

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## LECTURE III.

## TENNYSON AS LYRIC POET.

(Extracts.)

IN the month of June this year, (see p. 55) when travelling by train in the midland counties, I fell into conversation with a passenger whom I discovered to be a person of note in the political and social world, and a man of very pronounced opinions. These opinions he soon began vigorously expounding to me ; but I seldom talk much in a railway carriage, and therefore, after listening for some time, I handed him a sheet of paper. On this I had written three short quotations that refuted his best arguments ; and at the foot I added, "These are the words of the wisest man in the world." I was amused to find that my fellow-traveller was unable to guess the author of the quotations, but I at once let him into the secret. "Lord Tennyson !" he exclaimed ; "and on what authority do you call him the wisest man in the world ?" "Well," I replied, "if the consensus of the competent, as I seem to understand it, does not satisfy you, wait until death gives the poet his due ; believe me, you will then be inclined to admit that I am right. This is the best short answer I can give you, and I should weary you with a longer one."

Only a few months have passed, and death has indeed given the great poet his due—the due that I predicted for him, and even more. I own that I was astonished at the cry of grief, or admiration, or passionate love that rose, not from England alone,

but from the whole civilised world. I could not all at once shake off the belief that I who had worshipped long and silent and afar, must have some special claim in this large inheritance of tears, and wonder, and delight ;—tears—my love, indeed, was far too deep for tears, too proud to weep. On the evening of that death-day, friends said to me, “Of course, you will write some verses on Lord Tennyson.” Almost scornfully, or bitterly,—or was it jealously?—I broke into answer,—

“ I care not in these fading days  
    To raise a cry that lasts not long  
    And round thee with the breeze of song  
    To stir a little dust of praise.

\*        \*        \*

So here shall silence guard thy fame.”

But day ceased not to follow day, and each new day brought with it some new beautiful or tender tribute to the memory of the great poet who had passed away from us. I felt that I was but one with my kind, one only among tens of thousands who like myself had worshipped long, and silent, and afar.

This evening I have set before me the pleasant purpose to deal with the lyrical genius of our beloved poet, to speak, therefore, of his greatness ; for as a writer of lyric and song, he unquestionably holds a very high position indeed. And if we had reason to doubt the propriety of placing Lord Tennyson’s name on any level with the names of Shakespeare and Milton, so we may fairly complain of the reviewer for ranking him, as he does in respect of

influence, with Mr. Gladstone and Darwin. "Let who will make the people's laws ; let me make the people's songs" (p. 19). What man amongst us places Cecil in that niche of his heart where Shakespeare is enshrined ? No statesman, surely, may rank with "Those rare souls, poets, whose thoughts enrich the blood of the world." And Mr. Gladstone himself seems to have felt this as a truth when some few years ago he addressed his great contemporary, Tennyson, with words like these : "Your life-work belongs to a region more exalted than mine, and your name will be remembered when mine has long been forgotten."

"There is grandeur in this view of nature," exclaimed Charles Darwin, when at length he arose from his long pondering over variant life. But we who heard him, said within ourselves, "That may be, or *may not be* (pp. 15, 46). Ours must be 'the breath and finer spirit'" of that nude knowledge, when clothed with emotion, idealised, interpreted by the poet—"Move upward, working out the beast."

I remember how, two or three years ago, a critic, after calling attention to the fact that Tennyson had never pointed the way to undiscovered regions of thought, had never stood on tiptoe to describe new worlds, concluded : "In all these directions he has been prompt to follow, quick to apprehend, but never himself a pioneer. Where then has his greatness lain ?" Now, let me ask, would any lover of literary art have had it otherwise ? "Would'st thou plant for eternity ?" said Carlyle, "then plant into the deep infinite faculties of man, *his fantasy and heart* ;

would'st thou plant for year and day, then plant into his shallow superficial faculties, his self-love and arithmetical understanding."

That is what Mr. Gladstone meant, and it is worth remembering in these machine-made days when we "scarcely believe much more than we can see," as Shelley says somewhere. But let our great poet, prophet, and teacher speak for himself, and from his most unworthy poem :—

And I said, "O years, that meet in tears,  
Have ye aught that is worth the knowing ?  
Science enough, and exploring,  
Matter enough for deplored,  
But aught that is worth the knowing ?"

Has he any more important lesson than this? From "Locksley Hall" to "Locksley Hall" it is the burden of his teaching.<sup>1</sup> "Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers"; those words are in "Locksley Hall"; "Science grows, and beauty dwindles;" those wonderfully kindred words are in "Locksley Hall Sixty Years After."

Greater than Gladstone, greater than Darwin, the wisest man in the world. But here I am reminded by the reviewer that "*the one touchstone of poetic greatness is expression*"; that wisdom in poetry is but a small thing, sought after by the vulgar; to critics at any rate a thing of poor account.<sup>2</sup> No lover of poetry, I trust, is more swayed by the power

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<sup>1</sup> P. 15.

<sup>2</sup> P. 20.

of expression than I am. This is equally true of all prose that comes within the region of literary art; no such prose that lacks beauty of expression, that was "built to hand and not to harp," ought to live longer than a year. But expression, though it may come equally first, *comes not alone*. We might as well expect to separate expression from the human features, as poetic expression from the thought or emotion expressed. And let me begin with this general truth: the finer the features, the more beautiful is the expression.

\*       \*       \*       \*

Even in this department of lyrical poetry, in which expression ranks comparatively higher, I cannot, like the reviewer, allow Tennyson an absolute supremacy. Certainly Shakespeare and Keats are mentioned as compeers; and the lyrics of Tennyson (like those of Keats) are "Perfectly beautiful, let it be granted them; where is the fault?" But they do not always thrill you; sometimes they lack force, fire, passion; sometimes they are sweet, even to softness, and betray that element of weakness pointed out in my first lecture. Tennyson has written "Fatima," but Shelley has written both the "West Wind" and the "Skylark." Surely Shelley deserved some phrase of mention—we will not speak of honour—from the reviewer's pen: If I might select one poem in our literature in which all the best elements of lyrical poetry seem to be represented, that poem would be Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind." Now this is a lyric, and mere perfection of form might give it some

rank ; but notice the many other high qualities that unite to place it amongst the very finest of its kind. There is the personal element strongly pronounced—a wonderful charm in a lyric—you have all felt it in “Crossing the Bar”; there is prolonged and fine, mighty, and prophetic emotion and thought; there is fiery passion and deepest pathos; there is imagery abundant and lovely and wonderful; and as to the manifold music—listen to the large free movement, now calm for very fulness, now tumultuous as the tempest; the absolute ecstasy of the song-bird; the wild or plaintive or passionate melody; the long cadences of melancholy sweetness—think of these and all those other elements, just enough reduced to perfect form by just enough of perfect art—and then believe with me that in the poetry of the lyre Tennyson has another rival besides Keats. Shakespeare, as I endeavoured to show in my former lecture, should be no rival at all.

\*       \*       \*       \*

I have now spoken at some length on Lord Tennyson as an artist in verse; but “a poet,” says Wordsworth, “is a man who rejoices more than other men in the spirit of life that is in him. The purpose of this highly-gifted being is the expression of truth.” I think that we may well allow these old-fashioned notions of another great laureate to be present with us as we take our leave of the laureate who has so worthily succeeded him. And let us glance again at the poem I mentioned at the beginning of my lecture, “The Poet,” in which we found the word

wisdom in large type ; the second stanza repeats the words, "HE SAW." We are too prone in these days to give up old-fashioned notions ; surely this is another we often forget ; the poet is *a seer* ; and there was a time when seer, bard, and priest were one "interpreter between the gods and men." "Thus truth was multiplied on truth" ; this other line in the poem which sums up the poet's work corresponds to Wordsworth's opinion of the function of these "rare souls." We will call one other to witness for us, one whose life was a true poem : "Poetical powers . . . are the inspired gift of God, rarely bestowed in every nation, and are of power, beside the office of a pulpit, to imbreed and cherish in a great people the seeds of virtue and public civility, to allay the perturbation of the mind, and set the affections in right tune." So John Milton wrote. And this is what Tennyson means in the words perhaps more familiar to you. You will find them in the same poem, "The Poet."

"So many minds did gird their orbs with beams  
Tho' one did fling the fire ;  
Heaven flowed upon the soul in many streams  
Of high desire."

Not expression alone, but that and much besides, is the touch-stone of true poetry—of the true poet. "The poets of the age, those who read the inner life of the time, and form it, are ever the measure of its conduct, philosophy, and achievement ; and nobly has Tennyson performed his mission."

And what comes next? a slighter age, and no poet?

“A simpler, saner lesson might he learn  
Who reads thy gradual process, Holy Spring;<sup>1</sup> . . .  
Thy scope of operation, day by day,  
Larger and fuller, like the human mind.”

Let us not say with one critic that Tennyson is the last of the Laureates, nor with another that “poetry is played out.” Rather let us believe with Matthew Arnold that “the future of poetry is immense”; that as long as human life retains the common instinct of self-preservation, it will care to reverence and to cherish the high poetic traditions and powers of its humanity.

Most appropriate here are the words of M. Taine: “The poet is for ever young. For us, the vulgar, things are threadbare. . . . On the other hand, the poet is as the first man on the first day.”

The poet is for ever young, but our earth is not for ever; and “Symbols, like all other terrestrial garments, wax old.” And these wondrous word-symbols of poetry, they may outlive a picture, a statue, music; but they too must pass away. Is there no hope beyond this world for poetry, the divinest thing human in this world? Let us ask of the great master who has sung of worlds before this world. We ask him not in vain; the answer comes as from the region of the immortals:—

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<sup>1</sup> From the “Progress of Spring,” a poem I would commend to all my readers as inexpressibly beautiful.

“If the lips were touch'd with fire from off a pure  
Pierian altar,  
Tho' their music here be mortal, need the singer  
greatly care?  
Other songs for other worlds! the fire within him  
would not falter;  
Let the golden Iliad vanish, Homer here is Homer  
there.”

Our Singer now is there—there where we find  
him worthier to be loved. There let us leave him,  
deeply thankful that he dwelt so long amongst us,  
reverently convinced that in benign influences of  
wisdom, grace, and beauty, he dwells amongst us  
still.

## On the Day of the Funeral.

OCTOBER 12TH, 1892.

My solitary thought—amid “the noise of the mourning of a mighty nation.”—(Wellington Ode.)

“Whatever way my days decline,  
I felt and feel, tho’ left alone,  
His being working in my own.”

*In Memoriam.*

They mourn him laid in burial state,  
Where rest the bards that nobly wrought,  
“A king among the kings of thought,  
Our Tennyson, the Good and Great.”

They whisper low, “The light is spent,  
Our light that led us through the gloom” ;<sup>1</sup>  
They murmur dirges o’er his tomb,  
“Our joy was with him, and he went.”

\* \* \* \* \*

But O my lover, teacher, friend,  
No sadness of farewell from me,  
Nor murmuring at Death’s mystery,  
For thou art with me till the end.

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<sup>1</sup> “We feel as though a great light had gone out, not to be rekindled in our time, and left us in a darkness that can be felt.”—*Daily Graphic*.

## APPENDIX TO SECOND EDITION.

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(a) Some inquiries from friends and readers have induced the author to append the following remarks. The lines on p. 67 are quoted partly as examples of general weakness, and not altogether as illustrating weakness in "charm." "What go ye into the wilderness to see," is biblical to excess ; metrically weak also.

Much of the "Conclusion" of the "May Queen" is below the standard of the other two parts ; and this first line,

"I thought to pass away before, and yet alive I am," with its forced inversion and vowel repetition at the close (especially when we have regard to the rhymes of the first couplet), is by no means the strongest of its company. The expression, "I thought *to pass* away," may be dialectic ; but we are more familiar with "I thought thy bride-bed *to have deck'd*, sweet maid," (Hamlet). The following examples are chosen from a later poem, "The Princess;" Canto V., lines 60-65 ; also lines 78-102 ; VI. 131 ; VII. 21.

Sometimes this occasional weakness is due to mannerism, verbal or metrical. An author is said to

be guilty of mannerism when he employs a striking expression of his own, or a known rhetorical device so often as to offend good taste; or when he employs it consciously, and for the purpose of producing a forced and isolated effect, rather than unconsciously, and as subserving the main artistic purpose of his work. One example will illustrate this. The poetical use of the verb *hang* in such a line as

“I *hung* with grooms and porters on the bridge”  
—(*Godiva*).

or in

“Who but *hung* to hear  
The rapt oration flowing free”—(*In Memoriam*)

occurs in “The Princess” no fewer than nine times, and this frequent recurrence of the word has a tendency to weaken the style both of parts and of the whole.

The reader must not too readily trust the impression produced on his mind by any isolated passage or example. This word would not have been put forward as suggestive of mannerism but for the fact that it is one among a large number of instances. Only by taking into consideration as nearly as possible the whole of a poet’s work can we expect to form a reliable opinion on such points. “Parts,” says Dr. Johnson, “are not to be examined till the whole has been surveyed.”

(b) This principle of criticism applies with equal force to the question as to whether we may now and then hear the voice of a dramatist speaking through

the lips of his own characters (p. 31). Tennyson would tell us<sup>1</sup> that his method is dramatic,

“By making speak, myself kept out of view,  
The very man.”

—(Browning, “*Sordello*”);

and he added the significant title *Monodrama* to later editions of “Maud.” But long and close study of the writer and his times furnishes much modifying evidence, and the conclusions of p. 31 are supported by the eminent critic who a few years ago expressed himself as follows: “The new ‘Locksley Hall’ is the hopeless revolt of the old poet against the shams and bad conventionalities of his day, just as the old ‘Locksley Hall’ and ‘Maud’ embody his hopeful revolt against the same.” Still more to the point are the remarks of Professor Dowden in his paper on “Victorian Literature,” *Fortnightly Review*, June, 1885. Tennyson’s own statement that “Maud” was slightly akin to “Hamlet” would, if adequately discussed, add evidence both for and against. The student who desires to form an independent opinion of the personal element in “Maud,” should not miss a single line the poet has penned; should examine, for instance, the verses contributed by Tennyson to periodicals, for some of these verses are not found in the collected works; he should notice changes made in later editions; should learn the poet’s habit of expressing himself from his other monologues, monodramas, and dramas; in short, as far as possible, he should know

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<sup>1</sup> Letter to Robert James Mann, M.D.

the whole work, and the man from his work. Hence he may expect to find that opinions vary, and that his own opinion will be subject to modification as he pursues his studies year after year.

(c) Even an Appendix may fitly close with the kindlier office of criticism, and my third note is subsidiary to pages 68 and 69, which deal with our poet's superior finish and taste, and his originality. He does not, as far as I can remember, make use of the beautiful word *Zephyr*; it has been sold to vulgarity possibly beyond the redemption of Tennyson; but the word *beauteous*, which also has lost caste (Thackeray almost killed it), he does employ, and with very fine effect :

“Come, beauteous in thine after-form,  
And like a finer light in light.”

—(*In Memoriam.*)

To make this clear, I need only quote a line or two from an inferior verse-maker of our time, who, by the way, does include *Zephyr* in his vocabulary :

“Beauteous gems (*i.e.* stars) when sets my day,  
Teach me your tranquillity.”

This same word *beauteous* seems also to supply us with an additional example of originality, as in the line from the “Princess” :

“Breathing and sounding beauteous battle . . .”

where its use is both daring and successful.

## (Added Later.)

(d) P. 18. *Useful books and papers* :—To these may be added a “Chart of the ‘In Memoriam,’ ” by G. G. Napier, M.A.; an essay by Dr. T. C. Finlayson (recently published by Messrs. Macmillan); and a Study by Joseph Jacobs (D. Nutt).

(e) P. 84. “*Variant life*” :—A correspondent “cannot find *variant* in a dictionary.” Some dictionaries will give it. The word is used in the sense of “assuming various forms.” It was suggested in the text by the wonderful passage in Lucretius (v. 819–834), which contains the line

“Aëriasque simul volucres *variantib' formis*.”

(f) P. 64. *Whitman and Tupper* :—These authors are associated only in respect of the *form* of their work. I gladly acknowledge the forceful intellect of the American writer.

# NEW STUDIES IN TENNYSON, INCLUDING A COMMENTARY ON "MAUD."

By MORTON LUCE,

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*Bookman.*—“ Conscientious and helpful papers for young students. . . . As an unconventional study it deserves considerable praise.”

*Manchester Examiner.*—“The author has in preparation a larger work, which will more fully embody the results of his studies of the late Laureate’s productions. The first part is devoted to ‘Lessons from Tennyson.’ In the second part is given the substance of three lectures dealing with the poet in his three aspects of epic, dramatic, and lyric artist. The young student will find this book helpful in interpreting the meaning of the obscure passages under notice.”

*Glasgow Herald.*—“Mr. Luce is occasionally suggestive in his comments, and with good reason takes certain reviewers to task for the use of exaggerated language regarding Tennyson’s place as a poet. Possibly a good many will agree with him when he says, ‘Tennyson’s chief weakness is weakness—even in his charm we often find a softness which sometimes suggests want of strength, and is akin to effeminacy.’ These ‘New Studies’ are preliminary to a much larger work which Mr. Luce promises us, and which will contain complete commentaries on the main poems of the late Laureate, together with critical and explanatory notes on all his other writings.”

*School Guardian.*—“ . . . The first paper, called ‘A Lesson in Consecution of Thought,’ deals with the Preface to ‘In Memoriam,’ and is suggestive.”

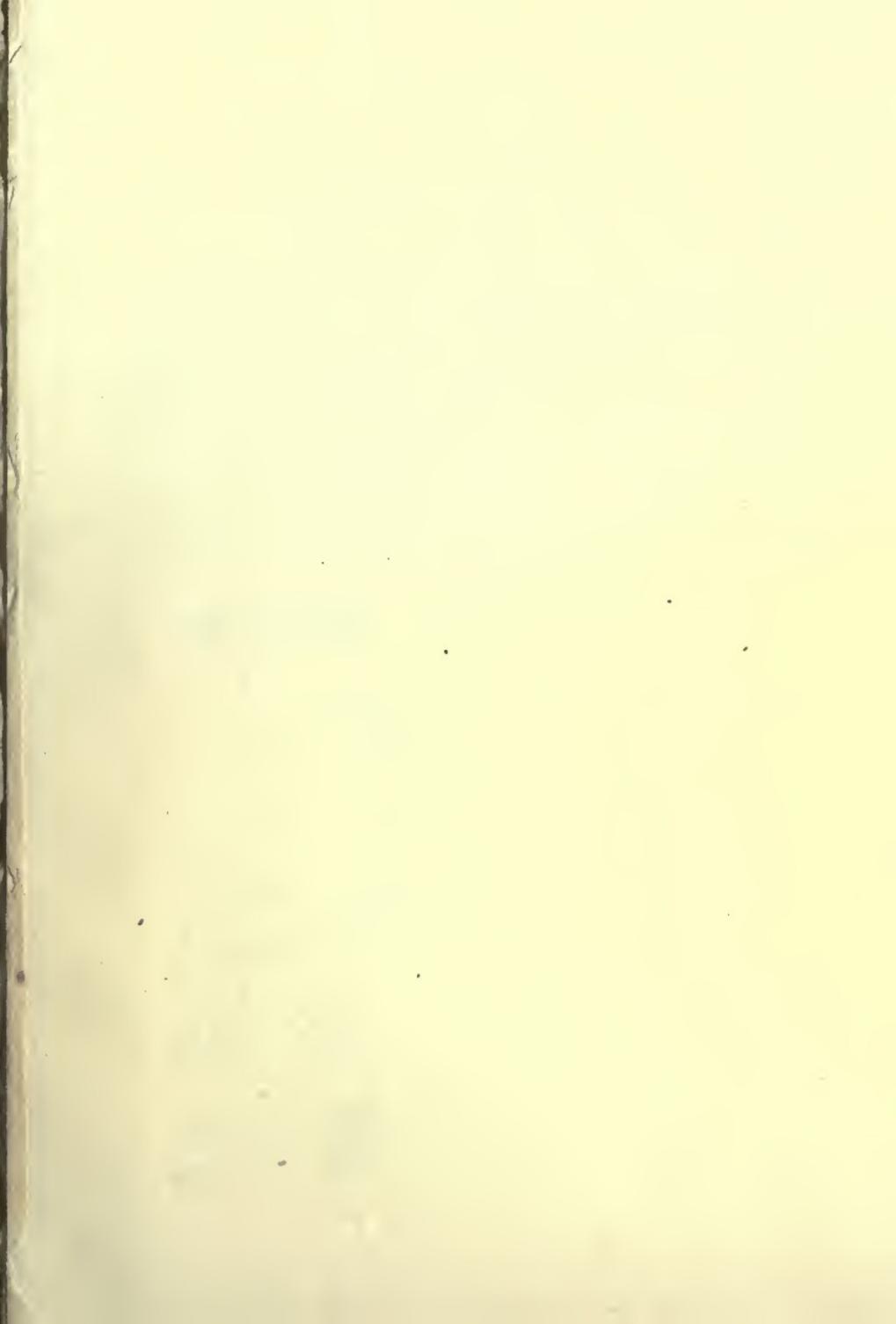
*Sheffield Independent.*—“In the second part of the book Mr. Luce makes some very just observations on the general tone of the critics now that the voice of our late Laureate is silent in death. He contends that great though Tennyson undoubtedly is, he is not a Shakespeare or a Milton; and he reminds the critics that they do not raise the object of their admiration by losing all sense of proportion.”

*Schoolmaster.*—“In his preface the author frankly avows that this work is simply the precursor to a much larger work which has been on the stocks for some time, and is still far from complete. . . . His interpretation of the poet is very intelligent, and certainly sympathetic. In Part II. he deals with ‘Tennyson and his Reviewers.’ Mr. Luce, though a great admirer of the late Laureate, has been stung to criticism by the nauseating and indiscriminate rhapsodies of certain newspaper critics. The gist of the author’s con-

tention is that Tennyson has produced no really great drama or epic, that he has not shown such constructive skill—in addition to mere poetic power—as entitles him to a place in the front rank. We think his estimate just, and though he has been thus outspoken, he shows a great knowledge of the beauties and graces of Tennyson, and will help his readers to a more intelligent if, in the majority of cases, more critical estimate of his worth."

*School Board Chronicle*.—“Greater than Gladstone, greater than Darwin, the wisest man in the world.” So Mr. Morton Luce characterises Tennyson. And in the light of these words it will seem strange to the reader to hear that in the three lectures on “Tennyson and his Reviewers,” extracts from which form part of Mr. Luce’s *New Studies in Tennyson*, he devotes much space to blaming the reviewers for their indiscriminating eulogies of the poet. “If I seem harsh, or even unjust in some of my remarks,” he says, “I must ask you to say of me, ‘it was not that he loved Tennyson less, but that he loved Shakespeare and Milton more.’” And throughout these studies his great love of Tennyson is indeed apparent. But he complains of a tendency on the part of the reviewers to “forget Milton and degrade Shakespeare,” since “we English possess two poets of the very first class, and only two—Shakespeare and Milton.” He is doubtful whether there is even a second class, though he would place Tennyson at the head of the third. Not all genuine lovers of poetry will go to this length with Mr. Luce. Most will, at least, be inclined to put Milton a class below Shakespeare, even if he has that second class to himself. But, apart from this question, Mr. Luce’s studies are admirable, and will be most helpful to all who delight in Tennyson and yet feel that a little light from outside is needed to a full appreciation of all the beauties and lessons of his work.”

*Nottingham Daily Guardian*.—“A thoughtful and suggestive book, which may be commended to students of the late Poet Laureate. The arrangement adopted is an admirable one, and the lessons are succinctly put. A commentary on ‘Maud’ is included, as also is the substance of three lectures on Tennyson and his reviewers by the author.”





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